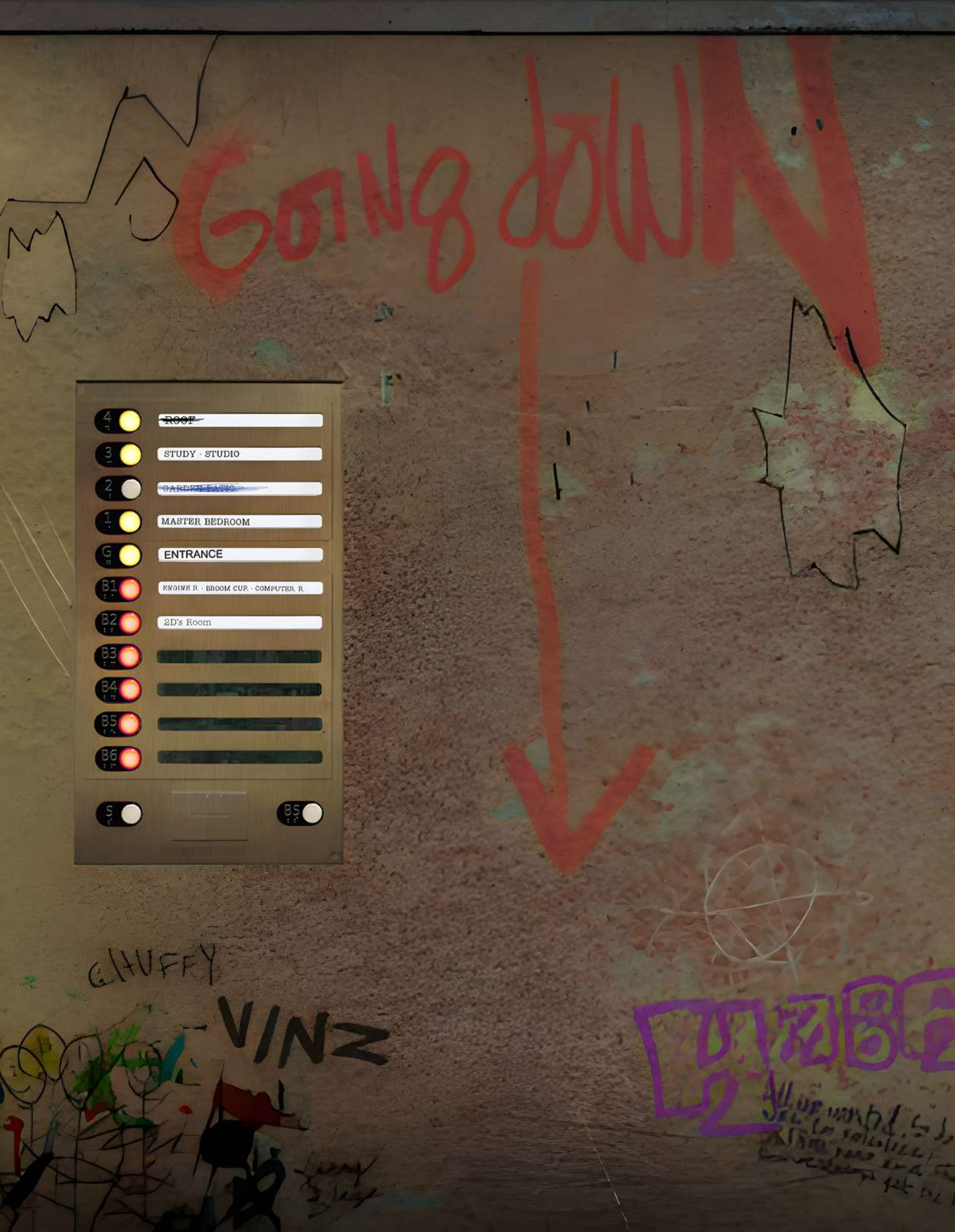
Gorillaz
DAWN OF THE OGRE
FURY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4 ROOF
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2 GARDEN PATIO
1 MASTER BEDROOM
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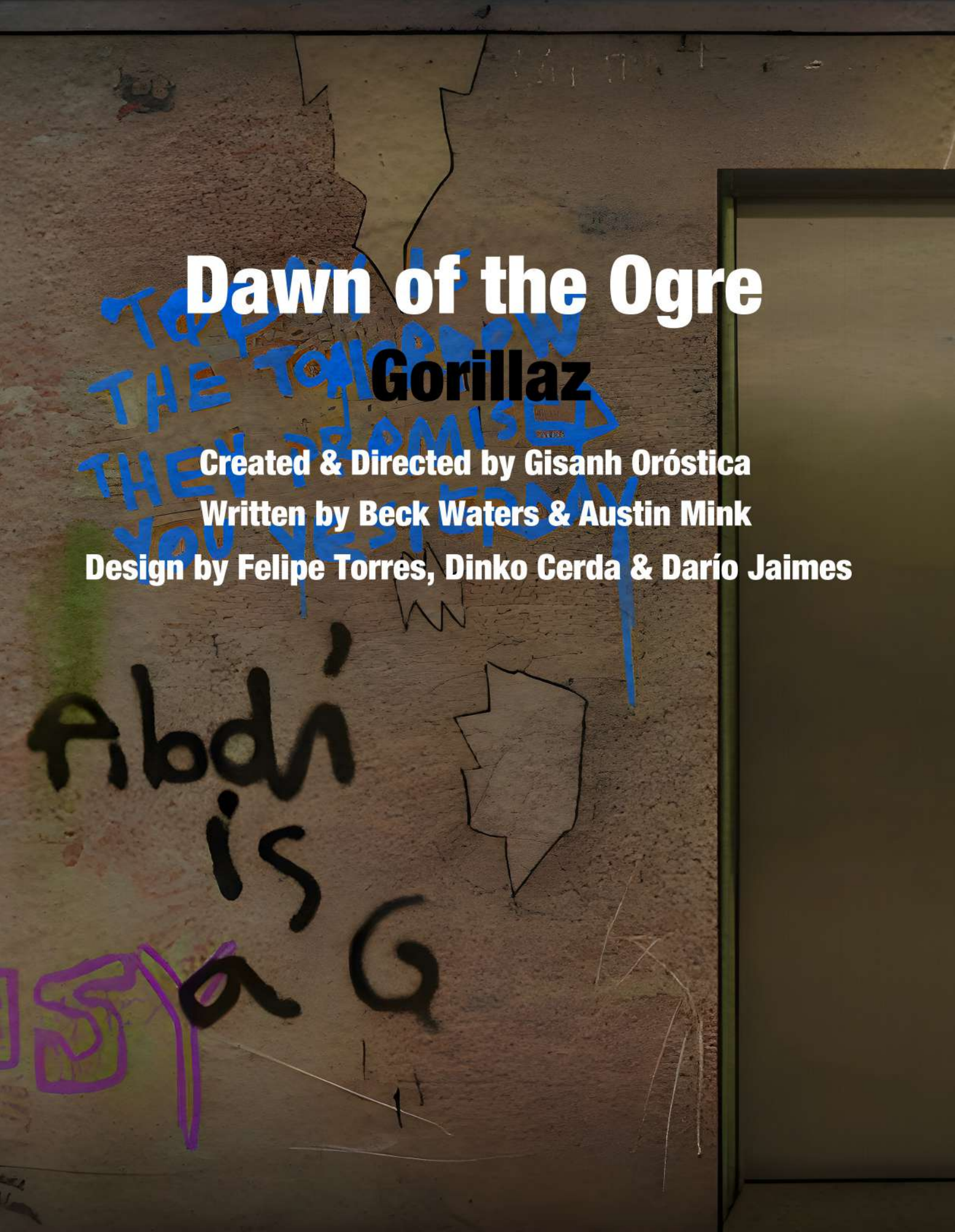
Dawn of the Ogre
Gorillaz
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Written by Beck Waters & Austin Mink
Design by Felipe Torres, Dinko Cerda & Darío Jaimes

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Prelude

Are you sitting comfortably?

Where we last left off, Murdoc Niccals was all by himself in the crumbling massive haunted mansion and recording HQ, Kong Studios. Noodle had supposedly died in the epic 'El Manana' footage, though it appeared as though she had parachuted off the island, safe and sound, taking time to herself on a holiday in Maldives.

Murdoc: Oh right, about that...yeah it was all bullshit from my end, whoops.

I'm sorry?

Murdoc: Erm yeah, I actually didn't quite know where she was.

But what about the picture? We saw her parachute off the island.

Murdoc: Ah, well. She was meant to parachute off, I've seen footage of that and you can see her leap off, but well, y'know…maybe she's dead. Who knows?

M-Maldives?

Murdoc: Nope, she wasn't in Maldives. That was a lie.

But why?

Murdoc: Well, would you want the last page of your book to have a downer ending? We're Gorillaz! Not EastEnders, so I lied to leave the readers on a more positive note.

No more lies Niccals! You tell us what really happened. Now.

Murdoc: Alright, alright, keep your wig on...To tell you the truth I had no clue what happened to Noodle. I orchestrated the whole video and killed wee Jimmy Manson, but Noodle was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Like I told you last time we spoke, the choppers that shot her down weren't even ours, they were real ones with real bullets and they'd been tailing us for some time. Then directly after, the real helicopters, the ones from the original 'Feel Good Inc.' video, turned up. They'd been held up by bad weather over Essex. Noodle wasn't acting, and the island was actually being shot down in the video. I asked Jamie afterwards but he didn't know anything about those mysterious choppers either. No one did. Odd…Very spooky…Eventually, I did figure out who they were, but you'll just have to wait and see for yourself.

And yet, you remained so calm after your bandmate, your friend, just got shot out of the sky?

Murdoc: Actually, I'd convinced myself that Noodle was safe and sound for weeks after that shoot. As I said at the end of our last book, she was planning on leaving us anyway, her room was packed and ready to go, but as time passed, the boxes never moved and I had to face the facts.

So then, who was really responsible for the disappearance of Noodle?

Murdoc: We'll get to that in a bit mate.

Well…

Murdoc: Well…turn the page. Knob.

SEA
BACON

Chapter 1
A Synthetic Snapshot… so Far

'Too many days to get lost
Many many people I've known got lost'

In the year 2001 the band Gorillaz hit the planet like a musical meteor. Composed of four spectacularly individual anomalies; ageing lothario and bass-slaying mastermind Murdoc Niccals, vacant pretty-boy and golden-larynxed singer 2D, diminutive Japanese guitarist Noodle, and hip-hop hardman drummer Russel Hobbs, the force of their collective talents was devastating.

Murdoc: Ooh…I'm getting memento vibes from this, keep going.

With an incredibly creative blend of music, animation, technology, wit and humour, Gorillaz re-invented the possibilities of entertainment with every release. The awards came thick and fast too– Grammys, Webbys, MTV Awards, Ivor Novellos and more. They are the world's most successful animated band. Ever.

Murdoc: This time I'll be more quiet, okay? I'm in a different mood today…

Their first hit single, 'Clint Eastwood', topped the charts in all corners of the globe, "selling over 17 billion copies alone" (according to Murdoc). Their first album, 'Gorillaz', a fantastic collision of dub, reggae, hip-hop, punk and Cuban music, was released to a chorus of acclaim, selling in excess of 7 million copies, an actual verifiable figure. They followed this with their dystopian classic 'Demon Days' album in 2005, a kaleidoscopic collage of rap, roots, soundtrack and fable that rocketed up the charts worldwide, featuring collaborations with the likes of Ike Turner, Dennis Hopper, Neneh Cherry, MF Doom, Roots Manuva, orchestras, gospel choirs, damaged keyboards, infantrymen and more…

In 2006 Gorillaz played their last concerts in support of their 'Demon Days' album at New York's Harlem Apollo. Then…silence.

Murdoc: Erm…I don't like where this is going. Could it be 'less words, more action'?

All four members had disappeared, each going their own separate way. Noodle had been sensationally shot down from the floating island prop used during the 'El Manana' video and was presumed dead. Russel Hobbs went into hiding once more, his mind still fractured from his previous exorcism-based breakdown. And 2D? Well, who cares what he got up to? He probably went back down to Eastbourne again, back to work on his dad's stupid fairground.

Murdoc: OH NO. Hang on…Tell a lie, I remember operating on him at Kong Studios. I chloroformed him and then stole his organs. Hah hah hah…I think it made him quite ill. Still, he's a great singer, lovely voice box.

But where were we…? Oh yeah…So what happened? What became of our four animated globetrotting superstars? Was that really the end? Rumours of sightings raced around the internet, all unconfirmed. "Syria", "New York", "Dudley"... The list was endless. Mumblings of new tracks and works in progress had been leaked online but still no solid clue of a future release.

Murdoc: Don't get me wrong honey, I'm enjoying it, it's just I thought it would be quicker, and less sloppy.

We start where we left off, in October 2006, Murdoc, alone at Kong Studios, his band long gone. Now, for a second time, the… erm five? ...Six!? members of Gorillaz have agreed once more to sail us through the muddy secrets that revolved around the band's comeback.

Murdoc: I'm sorry cutie, it must be the age or the cold. No no no, don't leave, let's hang around, have a cig. This little giant might be back very soon.

This is, once more, the story of Russel, Murdoc, Noodle & 2D.

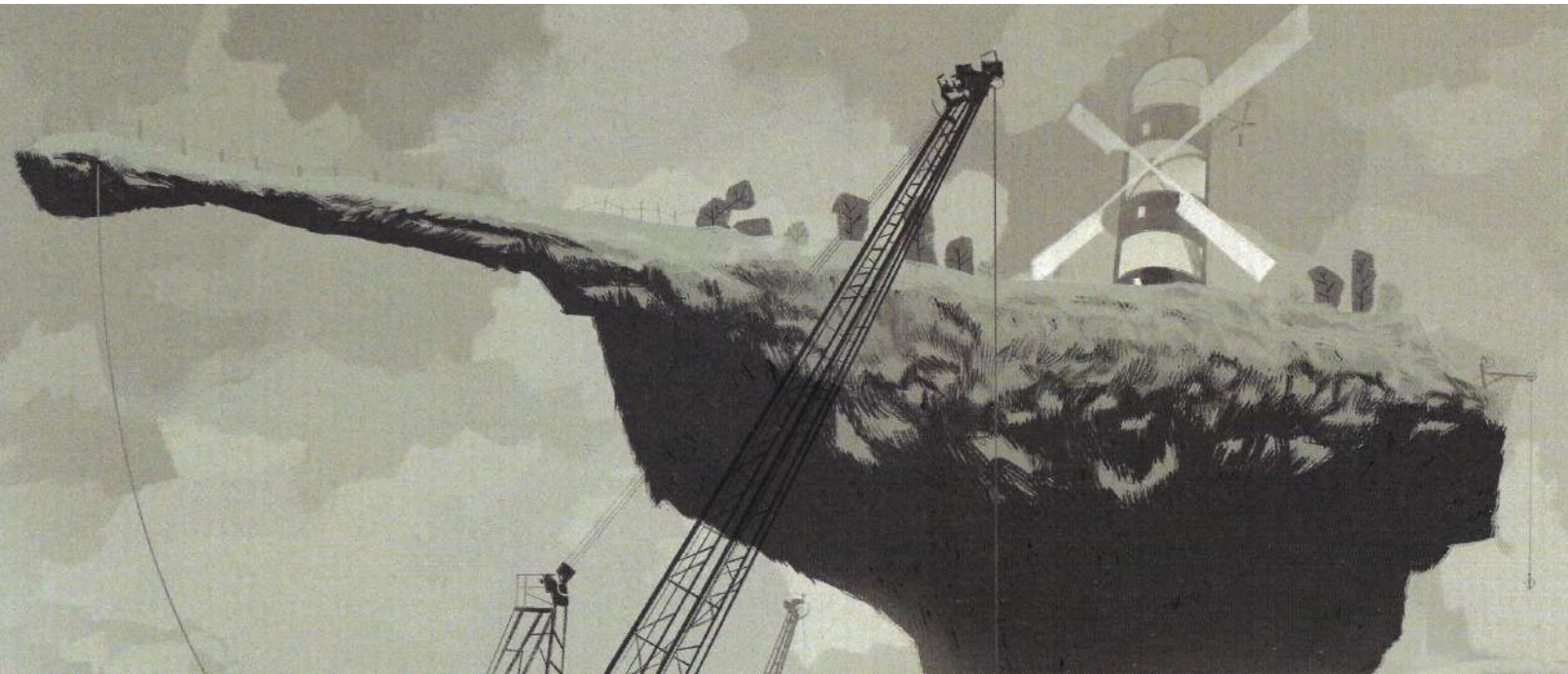
And also a cyborg.

And Ace…

Murdoc: Mmmh… Okay.

This is the 'Dawn of the Ogre'.

Murdoc: In fact, let me share a cig with you. This is gonna last a while…



October 27th 2006 saw Gorillaz release their own full-length autobiography, 'Rise of the Ogre', detailing and documenting their breathtaking story to date. Ominously though, none of the Gorillaz members showed at the book launch, adding fuel to rumours of the band's suspected demise…none of which were good. Niccals had invested $6 billion of Gorillaz' profits in Bernie Madoff's pyramid scheme. He'd bought shares in a mobile-phone gambling company and had been selling second-hand weapons to third-world dictators. Now Niccals was broke.

Murdoc: I'll tell you what happened. After Gorillaz split, I'd partied my way round the world, ruffling feathers and spilling drinks around the globe... but then the money kind of dried up. The Demon Days stuff had been expensive, and I'd invested in all these other things, stupid mobile phone companies and "get rich quick" pyramid schemes... I bought a load of pyramids in Giza over in Egypt, but it turned out the guy who sold them to me, Bernie Madoff, was a crook and the contracts weren't worth the parchment they were written on...I was broke. I needed to get some new funds coming in…So I reached out to EMI to hash out a little deal to rake some more green in. We couldn't do another album; our singer was getting a degree in law, our guitarist was missing and our drummer was having mental breakdowns, so I came up with an ultimatum.

Murdoc composed a collage record of sorts reusing tracks from the groups cutting room floor, 'D-Sides', which would consist of all their B-sides and remixes from their Demon Days singles, much similar to the band's previous side album 'G-Sides', which released back in 2001. Murdoc also threw in some goodies into the mix including tracks such as 'Rockit', 'Hong Kong', 'We Are Happy Landfill', 'The Swagga', and as bonus tracks for the Japanese release, 'Film Trailer Music' and 'Samba at 13'.

Murdoc: To be fair, EMI had been pressuring me to put out a B-Side collection for some time after Demon Days, because of how successful that album was I suppose it was inevitable.

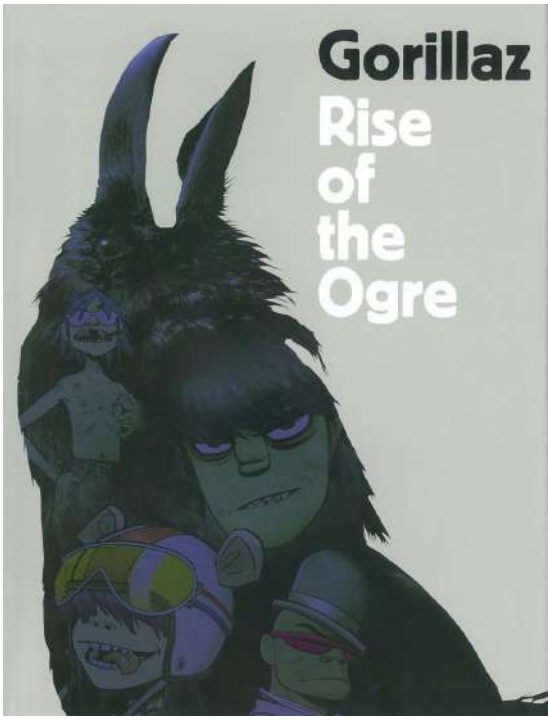
November 19th 2007 *D-Sides is released worldwide*.

The album performed similarly to 'G-Sides', reaching No. 63 on the UK Albums Chart, while it reached No.166 on the US Billboard 200 chart.

Murdoc: See, anything I whip out is just pure gold.

PopMatters gave the record a very good review, saying "No, it's not filled with violent, disturbing, or bizarre content, quite the opposite, in fact. What's so odd and peculiar about this album is simply how this set of song sketches and rejected ideas not only rivals its parent album (2005's left-field hit Demon Days) in terms of quality but, in many ways, it absolutely surpasses it." " The NME also gave the record favourable reviews, saying "Crazy as a second Gorillaz B-sides album might sound, this rummage through the 'Demon Days' cutting room floor is totally justified.

'We Are Happy Landfill' veers between organ-driven '70s rock and giddy punk rock on a jaw-clenching Prozac high, while 'The Rockit' doffs a cheeky cap to Damon's roots; with its deadpan delivery and taut, funky bass riff it sounds almost like an old Blockheads single…until the far-out synths that resemble bonking robots make their appearance, that is. But the highlight is 'Hong Kong' – the seven-minute epic recorded for War Child. Over a pulsating backing of acoustic guitars, pianos, and a load of instruments whose arse you probably wouldn't know from their elbow, Damon ponders 'The rising of an eastern sun' and a DJ with 'well-conditioned hair'. It's a reminder that he's one of our finest-ever songwriters, whether hiding behind a dead-eyed anime avatar or not."



ABOVE
"Better than The Bible"
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc: Great review! Don't know why he gave that guy Damon credit, I feel like it's just an inside joke between music magazines and labels, they just give Damon all the credit, it's pissing me off a bit actually. Y'know what, I take it back, that was a shit review. Do better.

Little did Murdoc know that on the horizon, would be a Gorillaz documentary, directed by filmmaker Ceri Levy featuring the likes of Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett, and none of him.

Murdoc: I didn't give much thought to it, Damon and Jamie never live up to anything, so I'd think this would be the same, so I just kinda sat back and watched it all fall apart in front of them.

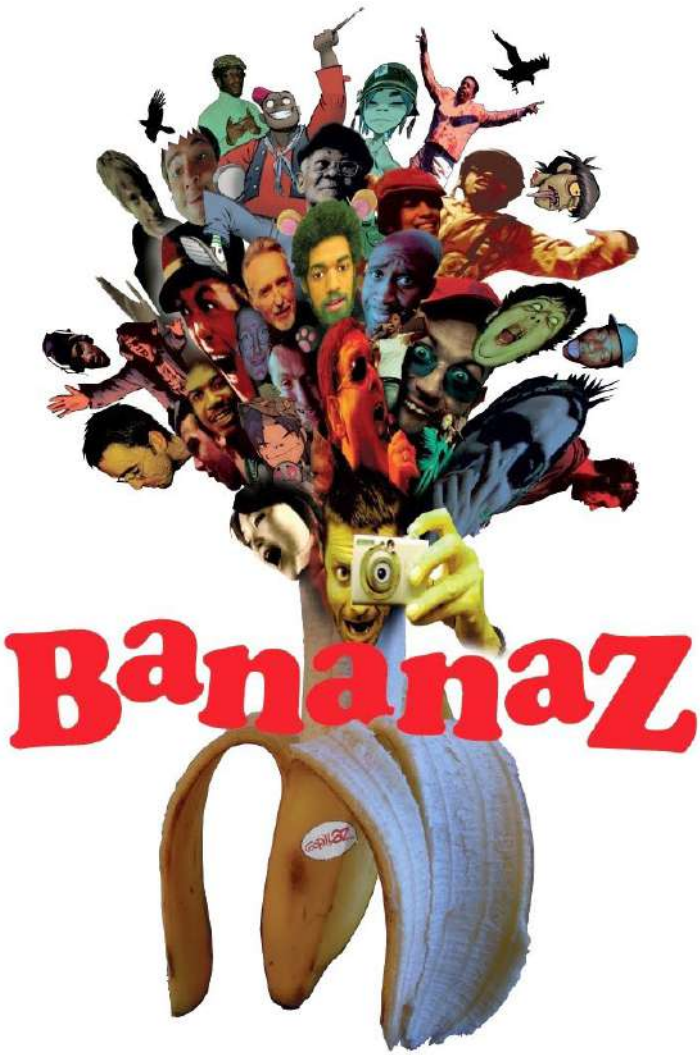
February 7th 2008 *The Gorillaz documentary 'Bananaz' premieres at the Berlin Film Festival*

The film garnered mostly positive reviews from critics with Eye For Film saying:

"This is a straightforward fly-on-the-wall look at Albarn, Hewlett and a host of top musicians including Ike Turner, De La Soul and many more as they prepare the self-titled Gorillaz debut album and follow up Demon Days, as well as taking their cartoon show on the road.

ABOVE
The Japanese edition of 'D-sides'

RIGHT
'Bananaz' Film Poster



Everything about this film is rough and ready, from Albarn's repeatedly failed attempts to throw a fag up to his mouth and catch it–'he'll be doing it with arthritis at 98' says Hewlett–to Hewlett horsing about for the camera and one of the roadies dumping his motherload, equipped with attendant smell, into the dressing room loo. The film stock, too, is extremely grainy, but fans of Gorillaz will doubtless enjoy its edge. The sound is excellent, throughout, and Levy's seemingly endless access gives a rare look at the sheer force of talent and energy that goes into putting the Gorillaz on the road. It also paints an intimate portrait of Albarn and Hewlett at their off-the-wall best. This is a bit grubby around the edges and a little too long for those who aren't ardent fans, but nevertheless a vibrant and pixieish look at a pop"

Murdoc however, reacted to the film very negatively leaving a drunken voice message for the director Ceri Levy, threatening him and demanding that he take down and cancel the Bananaz film.

Murdoc: Ceri, listen to me. I've set up this great new Facebook group, right? It's called: "Stop This Stupid Crap Bananaz Film It's Rubbish and Full of Lies and It's Not the Actual Gorillaz Anyway and Ceri's Just a Tosser. Let's Make This Film Go Away Forever I Hate It."

This led to an online war of sorts between Murdoc and Ceri, which ultimately resulted in an audiotape of Murdoc 'doing the dirty' to be leaked online.

Murdoc: I don't know how he got a hold of that, haven't spoken to him since. God knows how much video and audio footage he has of me just lying around.

Bananaz was later released on DVD on April 20th 2009.

Running Gun Blues

After the success of D-Sides, Murdoc had his debt cleared. Well, almost…we now know this. Murdoc Niccals, unsavoury foul-smelling wine-stained playboy that he is, turned to selling broken weapons to various underground networks, becoming some sort of clownish gun-runner…

Murdoc: I didn't make a pittance, EMI kept the profit for themselves as payment for the, (ahem), overdraft I took out to invest in Bernie Madoff's scheme. So I tried my hand at various tricks and trades...and one of them was amateur arms dealing. That's good fun! I bought a copy of 'As Used On The Famous Nelson Mandela' by Mark Thomas in a second-hand bookshop. Great book.

Murdoc realised that it was quite easy to push different weapons round the globe, by buying up old stock as countries upgrade, repainting them and selling them on at a profit to other groups.

Murdoc: As long as the paperwork is done, should all be cool, right? It's basically what Governments do anyway. The British arms industry is the second biggest in the world–we'll sell arms to anyone. Same all over. Every time any big country needs a weapons upgrade they just flog the old lot in a garage sale. I was just working as an independent trader.
The way I see it is, y'know, I knew they were duds. They were all damaged goods, they'd never work, so I was just trying to make a fast buck... As far as I can see I was doing something for er...'world peace' by selling weapons that wouldn't work. I just happened to make a bit of cash in the process. That did backfire though. I ran into some er...'dissatisfied customers'. Turns out that some of those bombs, those weapons I'd been flogging were for some underworld entity....some devil by the name of 'Malthus' or something. A demon of weaponry and underworld armourer. Although it might have been 'Sabnock', actually. Whatever. I'm no good with names. It was some devil who's into guns and stuff. Turns out that some of the weapons I had sourced were for one of those two...He was pissed with me when the bombs didn't really work, so he sent his gang of mercenaries to go after me. In particular, an underground network group of pirates called the 'Black Clouds'. They've been after me since they appeared uninvited in that El Manana video. It was them in the helicopters that turned up and shot the island down, at least I think it was. Our history goes as far back as 2004, but that's a story for another day. I smoothed it over with them at the time with promises of cheap weaponry, but after I stiffed them with the dud scuds.

The blood between Murdoc and Malthus turned very bad, and now he wanted a substantial payback, demanding his very own pound of Murdoc Niccals flesh.

(Murdoc pauses)

Murdoc: But, yeah, the Bernie Madoff thing was a mistake for sure. I thought what with the economy fluctuating so chaotically, surely your money's safe in pyramids? Apparently not. Still, I like to feel a little bit of my heart is entombed forever somewhere in Egypt. Next to Tutankhamun.

Later that month, strange sounds were heard emanating from the radio transmitter at the ruins of the abandoned Kong Studios, the former Gorillaz HQ. The frantic sounds of guitarist Noodle–apparently in some sort of danger. So what did happen next then? Had this immense musical force really come to an end? Would the sensational hit factory that was Gorillaz really close up their gates for good? Not quite.

ABOVE
The Room Of Brains A.K.A. Radio Room

OPPOSITE
6/6/6

Murdoc: I'd struck a pretty tight deal with Beelzebub to get Gorillaz up the charts in the first place...Truth be told, I kind of... promised him a lot of stuff early on–Made a deal with him when I was still into black metal and all that rubbish, and I invoked him...invited him into this world. It was a very er… Faustian pact...Mephistopheles and all that. I needed certain people off my back and, well, he wanted 'in' on the Gorillaz action. I mean, who doesn't? He said it'd give him access to the minds, hearts, and souls of impressionable kids world-wide, and if I agreed to, er…'endorse' his evil actions, he'd help shift us right up the charts. Get rid of all the hassle and make sure our album charted high. Sounded all dandy, from my point of view…but once Gorillaz were big, 'The Big Man', Beelzebub, 'Mr. B', he wanted his cut of the goods... y'know? It's funny–It doesn't matter who or what you are, everyone wants to be in a band–especially Gorillaz. But basically, y'know, royalties take time to come in...and I guess I didn't pay my dues to those concerned on time. But I've signed a few of those Faustian pacts, and to be honest, I've reneged on every one of them...so when it comes to pay up, I'm always off. Bills? I just mark them "Return to sender". So he was after me, big style.

Apparently, he wanted to eat my soul with "a nice Chianti" for all eternity. I must've really pissed him off. That's when he, you know, 'Mr. B', sent those demon flunkies to come get me. They found their way through Russel and his spirit-channelling abilities...He's just an open porthole for that kind of stuff. Always has been. But I wasn't there so they must've had a change of plans and gone for Noodle instead. She got dragged off during the final moments of the El Manana video to some underworld, Hades-type place, so I had to go looking for her.... it was up to me I guess to at least try and track her down, downstairs so to speak. After that y'know, I had to follow a different kind of trail...and go to Hell… Number of methods to get there; stick on 'Straight to Hell' by The Clash, rub a little juniper on the temples, fast for 7 days, a few circles of salt and some candles using....well...look...It's not like you just tootle off down some corridor. How you get there is a... long and complicated process that involves lobbing certain aspects of your psyche out into the abyss.

Murdoc: But it's a very real state. How 'real' others would consider that journey I don't know, but if someone pokes you in your 'third eye' it still stings. (snickers) And if someone stamps on your soul, stuffs it in a bottle, and labels it "Murdoc Niccals: Do Not Open Until Hell Freezes Over" you're still done for…The way I did it, I just looked up demon summoning in my spellbook, a 15th-century magical grimoire entitled 'Pseudomonarchia Daemonum', opened up a portal, and kind of tottered my way downstairs…

May 2007, Niccals, armed with his spellbook, the 15th-century grimoire Pseudomonarchia Daemonum, opened a portal and spent six months wandering the netherworld. In that time he'd attempted to make various deals with multiple demons of the underworld in exchange for Noodle's safe passage back to Earth, trading the souls of trespassers and paranormal enthusiasts that strayed too far into the bowels of Kong. Alas, his various deals fell through–there was no sign of Noodle.

Murdoc: Anyway, I couldn't find her. I spent six months or the equivalent there but I couldn't get hold of her. Maybe she found a way out of that one herself…

He returned to find Kong Studios in a state of disrepair, collapsing and overrun with zombies.

Sun Moon Stars

November 1st 2007 *Murdoc places Kong Studios for sale on www.giganticdisusedhauntedstudiosinthemiddleofnowhere.com*

Murdoc: I'd only just got back from the whole 'tracking Noodle down in the Underworld, and trying to rescue her from an eternal existence in the jaws of a 50ft soul-eating demon from Hades' epic-type-jaunt and the place was a total wreck, so I put it up for sale. It's a piece of history but no one wanted it. I loved Kong Studios, really, it was a fantastic hangout. It was the Gorillaz original HQ. The birthplace of my fantastic band. We all used to live there, me, Russel, Noodle… 2D but I had to get rid of it–people were hunting me down. I only came back to pick up a can of mace. When I got back to Kong Studios I found the place collapsing, full of zombies, just a mess. I didn't get any serious offers for the place, just a couple crank calls…some quacking noises down the phone and a few…er…delinquent inquiries from the more medicated part of our audience, but nothing more. I'd had a pretty testy couple of months as a whole really. Credit crunch, house prices collapsing…I just couldn't seem to shift that enormous deserted Kong Studios building that me and those other gonks had occupied for the last 8 years. And I knew that all those other people were still looking for me, the underworld entities and the pirates, The Black Clouds, and the deranged fans turning up with the paternity suits and stuff...

Murdoc: You'd think something like that would fly off the shelf. A gigantic disused haunted studio in the middle of nowhere? What's not to love? I even put it on sale through the property website, but nothing, so I went about getting rid of it a different way...(evil laugh)

Instead, he torched it, as a last-ditch effort to garner some cash.

July 25th 2008 *Kong Studios is burnt to the ground.*

Murdoc: That was the date of the Monkey King Opera at The Royal Opera House... I remember it well. I would. It was the date I burnt Kong Studios down and then went to the Opera as an alibi! I went along dressed to the nines, in a silky Victorian cape and silver-topped cane, and just guffawed loudly throughout the performance. I even started kicking the chair in front of me with my big Cuban-heeled boots. I just want to draw attention to myself really, LOUD, make nice and sure everyone got a good look at me–putting me far away from the scene of the crime...Arson doesn't look good on the CV really. As I said, I'd put the place up for sale and to be honest, Kong Studios is a piece of rock n' roll history. National Heritage. It should be covered in blue plaques. But no one was biting so WHOOSHH! I just torched the place. I blamed it on some local kids. I pocketed the cash and they all went to jail...(starts laughing) Which is funny really. I think they're all still inside. Sometimes you've just got to burn the past to make a new future.

However, time to gather his petty cash was cut short after the discovery of an underworld henchman trailing his every move…

Murdoc: Back when I was still in New York, right after the Apollo shows, I met up with Mos Def at The Box Club. Mos wouldn't stop yapping about someone called 'The Boogieman'. I thought it was just the cocktails talking, but Mos said he's a dark entity, a black-caped figure made up of all the evil in the world. A swirling black shadow, with a gasmask for a face. He is a war unto himself. Turns out that Mos was right! Seems like this thing's after me on behalf of Beelzebub to collect a certain soul-debt, as well as stiffing a certain underworld armourer. I'm definitely looking over my shoulder more often. No doubt that's another battle I'm gonna end up having…anyway, some naked guy kept hassling us and a fight broke out. Mos split, but I stayed on and the thing just escalated.

Murdoc: Some midget in a tux punched this clown out, and the stage act. Some chick, burst into flames. By the time they let the leopard out, I'd had enough and left. Is it always like that over there?

'The Boogieman', also known as 'Sun Moon Stars' and 'Flatulence' may have reappeared throughout history, an ominous figure accompanying the re-emergence of the Niccals bloodline through all of time. Flatulence was believed to be sent on behalf of Beelzebub as an enforcer of the underworld. Up next on The Boogieman's list, Murdoc, after he'd conned the underworld out of fame, fortune, and El Diablo.

Murdoc: I got that put into the fine print, written in blood I'd stolen off a Leper…"I want Gorillaz to be the biggest band in the world, get it?" In return I promised my soul, theirs to keep and roast over the fires of Hell for all eternity. But bollocks to that, I didn't fancy that at all. Any contract I made with him was null and void, cos I didn't actually write it in my blood. I used a pouch of blood I kept taped under my balls. Smart, eh? With the insurance money I could've paid off some of my creditors, but I chose not to in the end. Paying your debts off would be a tedious way to spend your illegally gotten gains. That's not fun, is it? No, I spent my dosh on building a big recording studio on a stinking mass of floating plastic in the middle of nowhere...I mean, it's what you should do with your cash though, isn't it? Big extravagant wastes of time…

It was time for Murdoc to get out of Dodge City and fast, having pocketed the insurance cash he fled the UK looking for a brand-new bright tomorrow.

Chapter 2
An Escape… to Plastic Beach

'Oh, joyous are us
Jerusalem calls
Let me or my love goes!
(It's a big wave!)
Here comes the wind and rain
(Cha!)
To swallow us up'

Using his newly acquired insurance money, Murdoc scoured the Earth for a new HQ, it needed to be somewhere hidden, somewhere unknown to even Google, a place from where he could mastermind a whole new operation…and he found it in Plastic Beach. The most desolate location known to man; Point Nemo, the furthest point from any landmass on the planet, positioned directly above the sunken city of R'lyeh—perfect for a man on the run.

December 24th 2008 *Murdoc finds Plastic Beach.*

Murdoc: I hauled one of the helicopters from the 'Feel Good Inc.' video out of storage and just scouted the globe: Arctic tundra, Amazon jungle, down the back of the sofa. I searched on maps, visited secret locations, until finally, I found it: Point Nemo. No Man's Land! Sticking out like a sore thumb in the middle of the ocean. No one would dream of looking for me there.

But this was no sun-kissed golden isle; Plastic Beach is an unnatural disaster zone, a fantastical island built of garbage, smack bang in the middle of nowhere. Made entirely of plastic, debris and the washed-up remnants of humanity; broken bottles, old tires, electrical cack and all manner of dumped and damaged goods are held together by the thick sticky gloop of jettisoned tar and oil slick from a million untold disasters nothing grows there, of course. Murdoc had found a new home…

Murdoc: My crowning glory. It is literally an enormous lump of plastic floating in the sea. An unnatural collection of ancient and modern debris, all of humanity's history smashed together: A coagulation of all the world's trash somehow came together to form a new stinking landmass, something that's been growing since man first lobbed a crisp packet into the sea over three thousand years ago. And now it has its own self-elected president - Murdoc Niccals, King of the Dump. I'm the boy here. My gaff, my rules. You can make as much noise as you want here! Fucking stinks around here though…

ABOVE
The Book Of M.A.N.

Murdoc: The funny thing was that it looked idyllic from far away, through the binoculars. A floating paradise! But once you get close you can see it's just landfill—grease, garbage, destruction, rusty old pipes and dumped bits of plastic. Bits of the music industry chucked into the ocean. That didn't bother me though.

Murdoc looked upon this garbage-ridden jumble and was speechless. He landed his copter on the island, stepped out and wandered up and down kicking the landscape. Metal, concrete and oil aside the only thing that could be seen on the island was plastic, plastic and more plastic. In a lot of formats, sizes and variations, but plastic in the end. That was of course until Murdoc chanced on a book. The first thing he found there that was made of paper, a dirty manual, cast upon the shore of the island entitled 'The Book of M.A.N.' This ancient, ominous book details the story of Man on Earth since the Big Bang to the present day.

Murdoc: Ah ah ah! Spoilers…We'll come back to that one. But the island was just amazing to look at mate. Yeah, it was very gross, sure, but with some proper care and a pair of trousers from Daddy Niccals, this place would become something amazing, ten times better than Kong.

Over the next few months, Niccals had various surviving bits of Kong Studios shipped out to this mysterious location. He built a Playboy Mansion-style base on Plastic Beach, a monstrous towering structure to house everything from his new HQ to a state-of-the-art recording studio.

Murdoc: The guy I got to design this place, M.C. Escher. Ahhh, he was a bit of a loon! I had to fire him in the end. It was ridiculous. I mean the drawings, like, you know the plans? They looked great! But half the stuff he built is lopsided. Every time I wanted to take a piss, I ended up on the roof. The doorbell would ring, I go and answer it….and I find myself in the closet. I couldn't find my way around any of his buildings. Stairs that went on forever. Mental! So… Yeah! I er, scrapped his stuff, and started again. In fact, the only thing I did keep of his was a staircase he designed leading into my secret war room, it's the EU building regulations, no less than three thousand steps. Standard really for a secret lair entrance, it's all in the books! I mean it wouldn't really be a secret lair if it was easy to find, would it? People would hear your secret chair scraping around on your secret floor wouldn't they, eh? Anyway, In the end, I spray painted the whole thing bright pink and built a big Tracy Island-type mansion on top. It houses everything from my recording studio to lavish boudoirs to glass-bottomed basement rooms, secret rooms, lighthouse towers… I was at home again. I wanted to be somewhere where I could take the girls and turn everything upside down, blow up the stereo. It makes Peter Gabriel's 'Real World' studio look well... Really rubbish! Plastic Beach is... Fantastiche!

It wasn't all dandy on Plastic Beach though…late at night Murdoc would sometimes be awoken by an ominous 'Blooping' sound, emanating deep, deep within the ocean floor beneath him, almost as if there was a sink positioned right below his island paradise…

Murdoc: I'd heard of this before, back in 97' something like, cor, a thousand or so miles East of Point Nemo, a noise was picked up by a bunch of egg-heads over at NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), it was dubbed 'The Bloop' and whatever was causing it, seems I built my new home right on top of it. And that's all true, you can Google it on…er…Yahoo... Spooky, eh?

Perhaps Niccals was toying with forces beyond his comprehension…

Pirate's Progress

Upon construction of the island, a new epiphany dawned upon Murdoc Niccals, a new idea. The leader has again chosen a fresh blank canvas to escape to and to plan the new Gorillaz campaign.

Murdoc: That's when I knew this place was grand enough to have its own album dedicated to it. The farthest point known from man, isolation, that's what charts.

It was time. Murdoc embarked upon a fresh set of recordings; tunes, tracks, outtakes and melodies that would eventually become the towering Gorillaz sonic monstrosity entitled… 'Plastic Beach'.

Murdoc: A continuation, if you will. Something that'll make Demon Days seem like a warm-up act. I figured that if I could deliver a third magnificent album I could actually fix all my problems; make new music, party my ass off until the point of needing a defibrillator and get back all the dosh and cred I needed to shake those assassins and bounty hunters off my back once and for all. I just started twanging away on Logic really, alone. Me, my bass and crate of rum, sat on the beach just warbling along to my spongey dub rhythms and recording straight into my laptop. Happy days! No expectations, just seeing what glory dribbled out of the fretboard. I love the beauty of those early etchings, staring into the vast, open chasms of the nocturnal universe, a sky full of dust and a gentle tune emanating from me and my minuscule soul. Mmh…when you're in that state, everything seems all…isolated and correct.

The warm smile on Murdoc's face hardens into a frown

Murdoc: And it's like concrete, light smashing hammer when you have to return to the realities of salesmanship and cram these delicate eulogies into the traps and get them to race, mongrel style, against the remedial emissions of some farcical vocoded hop-hip claptrap! PROMOTION! RACING AGAINST WHAT? Another sad-sack record company pitting their money on an overly groomed, e-numbered show-pony in an attempt to bludgeon their audience into submission...I mean...it's more important to have nice shiny hair than a decent tune these days!!! It makes me mad!!

SFX (Chairs and tables going over, room being smashed etc.)

January 14th 2009 *Murdoc and Damon Albarn appeared on BBC Radio 1 with Zane Lowe.*

Murdoc: What was-was Dam- What's he doing here? Because I thought, well he said we want like the Gorillaz sort of main creative force on your show…You've got Damon, what's happened?

BBC Radio 1 had contacted Murdoc and Damon Albarn asking if they'd be willing to come on an upcoming broadcast to showcase their demos. The broadcast opened with Albarn, as Murdoc was running late. Damon played a demo from his own project of the time, 'Carousel', with the early track 'Electric Shock'.

Murdoc: Sure, I'll premiere some of my demos, I mean I was going to be in the area anyway to collect the insurance money from Kong, so why not show people what's been going on with the world of Gorillaz and whatnot, yeah? But by God, was I gobsmacked when I arrived to find who sitting in my chair? Albarn… They said in the email that they wanted to interview ME! I bet it was that tossing Documentary that had them all confused. TITS. I can't say I remember much of that show, I'd done a few shots of liquid courage a few hours before to get me out of my shell a bit.

Murdoc in a drunken slur began to ramble on about his journey in Hell searching for Noodle and his Egyptian deal with Bernie Madoff.

Murdoc: You know both that guy who was hosting, whatshisface, Steve? And erm, Damon, were both quite rude during that whole thing. They kept laughing at everything I was saying, I was being 100% serious the whole time and they just kept laughing. So rude.

As the broadcast continued, Murdoc eventually gave the shipping forecast for the evening which started off as him sharing the weather, then slowly trailed off into him bragging about the girls he'd slept with the week prior. He then got bored and asked his old friend, David Bowie, who happened to conveniently be in the studio at that very time, to take over the broadcast for him.

Murdoc: Dave, Dave, can you come 'ere mate?

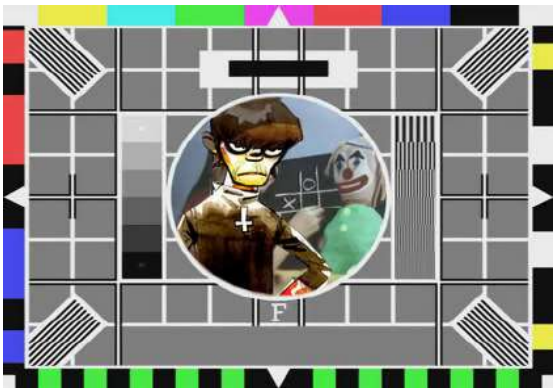
David Bowie: Yeah what's the matter Murds?

Murdoc: Can you come in and do the shipping forecast?

David Bowie: Yeah alright son, alright you're lookin' well. Right there we go. My name's David Bowie and this is the shipping forecast. UEWW.

Murdoc then proceeded to play a cover of the song 'America' by Razorlight. Which resulted in him bringing out bells, Casio keyboards, a sliding whistle and a trumpet while he provided some vocals of his own.

Murdoc: Even when I'm completely shitfaced, I'm a musical genius.



ABOVE
A Clown.
"She was a nice girl"
MURDOC NICCALS

Following songs picked from Damon and Murdoc of their musical influences as of late, Murdoc whipped out a behemoth of a demo, 'Broken'.

Murdoc: A friend of mine,'Barry the circus freak' did a far more accomplished rendition of this track, doesn't sound too different from 2D now does he? Only reason why he didn't end up on the final version of the track is that he wanted paying. I also played some of Stylo's backing track that was in the works, but it was definitely missing a lot. I hadn't had the opportunity to add more to it yet so it was still a pretty rough one, and of course, we didn't have 2D yet, so there were no vocals.

Close to the end of the broadcast, Jamie Hewlett arrived at the studio and threatened to cut ties with Gorillaz and join Razorlight with Johnny Boring.

Murdoc: I'm just a bit concerned, I wanna know who's Marmoset that is in the corner…He's been 'masticating' throughout the whole show...He's chewing an old bit of, I don't know what he's doing but…get the frogs off the top of the table.

After stumbling out of the studio, suitcases of cash in hand, Murdoc made his way into the passenger seat of one blacked-out burgundy 1978 Lincoln Continental, equipped with bulletproof windows.

Murdoc: I wanted to test the waters, see who was listening, see if the fans were still out there for us and also...and…also…look. There was a coded signal in there. I needed to let someone know that I was ready to make the shift over to Plastic Beach. The big push. Playing those tracks was the signal. The hidden code...that I was at the radio station and that my man, my contact needed to meet me outside. But yeah, backfired a bit because as soon as I left the studio a hail of bullets tore up the inside of my car. These other guys knew where I was at so all Hell broke loose...and right, it was also what led the Child Support Agency to track me down. They wanted me to pay up all this money to this band 'The Horrors'...So yeah, playing those demos just unleashed a tidal wave of attention, good and bad…

But his exodus to the secret hideaway was not to go entirely unnoticed. During Murdoc's final move these would-be assassins were alerted to his departure as he boarded the escape boat, clutching the suitcases stuffed with his remaining ill-gotten cash. With the champagne still fresh and bubbling, the very bottle he was holding was shot out of his hand…

Murdoc: The Black Clouds were on my trail, they were still cheesed off about all the dark weapons and useless shooters I'd stiffed 'em with. They must have got their hands on a new batch because the next thing I know is they've tracked me down and then bullets everywhere!

Still, Murdoc did make good on his ultimate escape to Plastic Beach and soon began work on his monumental musical escapade.

Murdoc: But before any of that I knew I had to get my band back together. I had laid out the outlines, now I just needed to fill them in. First things first, I had to deal with the situation regarding Noodle…

ABOVE
"She's Alive! She's Alive! Now I know what it feels like to be God!"
MURDOC NICCALS

Cyborgs in the Closet

With the legendary Gorillaz guitarist Noodle missing in action, Murdoc was left with no alternative. He used the DNA he'd scraped up from the 'El Mañana' crash site and constructed a cyborg replica of the original Noodle. With fizzing pipes, twitching cables and glowing LEDs, this organic android would perform all guitar-shredding duties on the album, and moreover, armed to the hilt, she would become Murdoc's own personal bodyguard to protect him from future attacks, which he suspected would be many…

Murdoc: Noodle was my greatest asset, she was an outstanding guitarist, looks great and a brilliant songwriter. I went back to the place I'd last seen her, back in 2006, the crash site, however, there was nothing left…I did what I could…I scraped up some of Noodle's DNA samples from the wreckage and got to work building a Cyborg version of her. It ain't the real Noodle, obviously, but you know, It's close enough for Jazz.

Once his shipment of robotic 'stuff' arrived, delivered exclusively by stork, along with a Noodle wig he'd purchased off eBay, Murdoc, Using the DNA remains he'd stored in a jar— bits of hair and skin, called up some top-notch cyborg-scientists and had them flown over to Plastic Beach on an all-expenses-paid trip.

Murdoc: We fixed her. Well, not her. Rebuilt a version of her, this one's better though. The Cyborg, she plays a great guitar, but…she ain't Noodle…but…well…guitar-wise she still shreds, at least I no longer need to put up with cyclothymia and adolescent curses. Kind of 'Six Million Dollar Man' - Styleee. She's my own personal gunslinging, guitar-playing bodyguard. She can shoot bullets right out of her mouth, you know. What other band can lay claim to something like that, huh?

What happens then if the real Noodle ever re-surfaced?

Murdoc: Oooh…Now there's a plot twist I haven't seen coming. What's the chances of that? Look. If Noodle's alive it'd be great to see her back…In fact, I could probably stick them together and have two Japanese female guitarists. Twins…One either side of the stage…That'd be incredible…I've got a funny feeling that I haven't heard the last from the real Noodle. The cyborg Noodle said her first words the other day…"Noodle!", bless her metal socks. Just like the real thing...And I didn't program any of that in so... as this cyborg version shares DNA with the real one, maybe they're connected...Maybe there's some kind of organic, 'psychic' link between the two...Maybe the real Noodle can even 'hone in' on this one, like some genetic tracking device...COME TO MUMMY!!!! Who knows how this'll pan out…

Life's a Gas

The album was now well underway, but there was something still missing. Something vital. Sure the tunes and melodies sounded great, but what would Gorillaz be without their gorgeous, gormless, black-eyed singer 2D? Nothing. Murdoc needed those vocals to give the record that distinctive sparkly 'Gorillaz' sound. But how to get 2D over?

2D: Right, so let's rewind back to 2006.

Murdoc: Here we go…Don't ask him anything serious, you'll just get a load of rubbish falling out of his trap. He doesn't really know what he's talking about, do bear that in mind.

2D: Apollo gigs had just happened and me and Murdoc went our own ways after our plans to move to Saint John's in Newfoundland collapsed. I didn't quite know what to do so I ended up going back to Jamaica for a while, to retrace my steps, but that didn't feel right…I didn't want to go back to Eastbourne again, I felt like I had nothing going for me there, so I just ended up feeling sort of lost…y'know? Plus I had a hefty amount of child support to pay each month so I needed to get some kind of income coming in on the regular again. Eventually, after thinking really hard about what I wanted, I decided to pursue a degree in law.

Murdoc: What?

October 24th 2007 *2D leaves-*

Murdoc: No, No, Nonononononono. No, I'm not sitting here for this, I'm popping out for a fag.

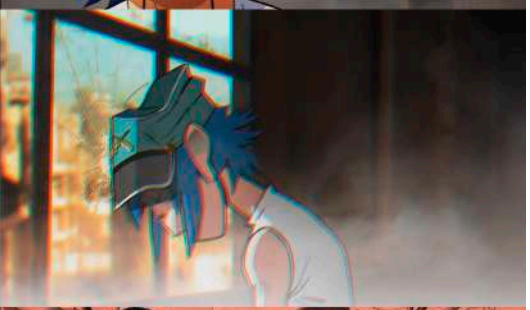
2D: Murdoc-

Murdoc: No. Shut it. No "sit down", no "stop it". I'll be back, I just can't sit here for this. I can't do it mate. I just can't.

Murdoc gets up from his chair and leaves the room.

October 24th 2007 *2D leaves Jamaica and returns to England*

2D: That's what I needed in my life, a law degree! I got a placement at Oxford University and rented out a little flat at Buckingham Palace Road in London.



Did you get accepted?

2D: I did!

Really?

2D: Yeah! Which is surprising since the acceptance rate is about 13% from what I can remember. I did achieve fairly good grades in school so that probably helped a lot. Those early days back in education were wicked, I was at a university! I was the talk of the town around campus and it felt like everyone was taking notice of me. It kind of reminded me of those days in Eastbourne, when I went home after the first album. But it quickly got stressful. I lost all my free time, exams piled up fast, I thought I was going mad. I had to type and write so much I think I lost circulation in me hands at one point. I definitely wanted to make a meaningful impact in my life, but even I knew what I was doing was crazy! At one point they actually drafted me In to handle a case.

No…

2D: Oh yeah, it went poorly as you can tell, I had to defend some bloke who got done for streaking. I decided to use the ol' 'Alien trick'.

What's that?

2D: I don't actually know, I made it up on the spot. I didn't actually bother to do any revision beforehand, I just went on a tangent about space aliens. The guy was found guilty, obviously, and I was never brought on as a lawyer again. After that, I dropped out, too much pressure for me in the end. Still, it was fun while it lasted…mostly.

A door opens, and Murdoc makes his way back to his chair

Murdoc: See? I told you I'd be back, er…we're done with this right? We're all done with this? Good.

November 30th 2008 *2D leaves the University of Oxford*

2D: I was back at square one, nothing. But I felt alright this time since I pushed myself to try something I never really had the chance to before…I was on the up for a bit…then he started calling for me.

Murdoc: Around this time I realised I needed those vocals, that 'melancholic soul', for the album. 2D refused. He wanted no part in a third Gorillaz campaign. Pffft!

2D: It started off pretty normal like a text or an email. Then it just kept escalating. Dead things arriving in the post, creepy drawings of him and Madonna, my face on a billboard with a bullet hole through it. He wasn't taking no for an answer—I needed to get away.

April 23rd 2009 *2D moves to Lebanon, Beirut.*

Unwilling to perform with Gorillaz again, 2D was sensationally gassed in his Beirut retreat during the summer of 2009.

Murdoc: 2D's harder to shift than herpes....Y'know, whatever you think of him, his voice is an integral part of Gorillaz. You can get away with ditching lots of aspects of a band, skipping parts, putting it down to 'experimentation', but you can't switch the singer. Very few bands get away with that. Perhaps New Order...Maybe. I knew I couldn't make a Gorillaz record without 2D's voice, only he wasn't keen, as if he's got a choice…So I just copied the beginning, the opening sequence of The Prisoner! Gassed him and had him freighted over to Plastic Beach stuffed in a suitcase. I used this wonderful thick turquoise 'valium gas'. Could knock out an elephant that stuff. Very effective.... also knocked out my documentary crew on location. Bit cruel, isn't it? Not a bit. Very. But that's me. I'm an evil sod. I wear black because it's the colour of my soul. My heroes are people like Bill Sykes and Nosterafu..."Ready?"

Niccals shouts to the camera crew he'd stashed in 2D's living room. Then his thick turquoise 'valium gas' fills the room.

Murdoc: I bet the 'Passion Pictures' film crew never saw that one coming…After that, I'd pretty much done what I needed to. I knew 2D has a crippling fear of whales, I found out when reading his diary while bunking with him during the first album - cetaphobia it's called - he can't stand them. So I installed him in the glass-bottomed room in a sub-sea level of Plastic Beach. Right in the underwater room. There's this whacking great whale called Massive Dick that's keeping an eye on him so he isn't going anywhere. He was literally crippled with fear. Just for safekeeping...Good eh? He should be happy, grateful that I bothered to drag him over. Might have stung a bit but I almost had him replaced with Engelbert Humperdinck, so he's lucky he's on there...

How do you feel about the island?

2D: Ugh. It's a beach. A horrible, Plastic, Beach. You can't even order pizza here…When can I go home?

Murdoc: I don't think that's happening for quite some time, old buddy.

2D: Why don't you just let me go you tosser.

Murdoc: Oh! Oh, 2D old buddy…Come, come, come. Y'know?

2D: If anyone can 'ear me out there then send for help! Send police! Help!

Murdoc: (Mockingly) Send for help! Yeah, do send for help! I need 20 B&Hs and a bottle of Grey Goose-

2D: He's keeping me-

Murdoc: -and a mallet!

2D: -PRISONER!

2D's room was left turned over, and his stuff was kicked around the place. The only clue to his disappearance is a ticket, a screwed-up invite.

"End of Days, The Last Great Party.

Location, Plastic Beach (48° 52′ 36" S, 123° 23' 36" ′W)
Bring a bottle.
Soundtrack supplied.
Your cordial host…M. Niccals. (Gorillaz) x"

The identity of the sinister assailant is still unknown, but…was this the first appearance of The Boogieman?

Murdoc: Nope.

Are we sure?

Murdoc: Yes.

…

Murdoc: I knew we had to take 2D down by force you know, cooperation was not on his agenda but I had enough heat on my tail to last a lifetime…so I had a contact of mine dress up as Flatulence…or 'The Boogieman' as you know him, while gassing 2D out cold so we could frame him for his disappearance. And it worked too, there's still people to this day debating over The Boogieman's motives for doing such a thing…but nobody stopped for a second to think that, actually, It wouldn't take that much effort to dress up as the git in the first place.

2D: (clears throat) Why bother dressing up just to kidnap me? If you were just gonna stuff me 'ead in a bag and throw me in a box it seems pointless.

Murdoc: Well, it was just for a laugh really.

Trouble in Hobbsville

With drummer Russel still absent without leave, it seemed that whatever band Gorillaz now were they would be missing their resident rock solid rhythm sensation.

Russel: Noodles disappearance was just…so sudden. I was still taking in everything that happened, before I knew it, we were being invited to the New York Apollo show to see Damon and his live band. I didn't even know what to do anymore, I was just so detached from everything…I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat…every now and then Murdoc tried getting a smile outta me, 2D would rent out some of my favourite movies we could watch, but even with these unusual acts of kindness we all knew something was off without Noodle…

On the evening of the first Apollo show, right before the tribute band commenced their performance, the trio stood in the lodge hallway of the venue, visibly shaken, not speaking a word to each other. What would usually be a room filled with endless quacking noises, physical violence or outlandish wacky occurrences, the only thing that occupied this specific room was the buzzing of a light accompanied by a vague brown smell; a mild stench of old fags, warm stale beer, cheap aftershave and the discomforting and awkward tension between the three band members…when all of a sudden, a wave of negative emotion washed over Russel.

Russel: It was an amalgamation of the little things…twinges of grief and despair came up… It felt like somebody had stabbed me in the chest. That wasn't the worst part–the voices were back. I hadn't heard them in years, then WHAM, just like that. This intense feeling of fear and terror came next. I felt like I was gonna drop dead right there. D and Murdoc grew a bit concerned and they tried getting me to calm down but I just couldn't take it, I had to make my way outside. The voices were louder than ever, I had trouble breathing. So many things were happening at once it felt like I-I…

The sweat that has been dripping down Russel's face is forming a small puddle around where he's sat, he dries his head, downs a couple of pills then proceeds to drink from a plastic cup he has placed next to him. Outside the Apollo, Russel could vaguely hear the performance commencing.

Murdoc: Oh yeah! New York New York New York! So good I said it thrice, the city that never sleeps so that makes two of us-

Russel: I knew I couldn't stick around anymore, it was pushing me to the very edge…I made a pretty rash decision next.

In the dead of night, Russel found himself on the doorstep of a childhood friend's house.

Russel: I'm not going to give you her name just outta respect, but I will give you some background.

1990's Brooklyn, New York.

Russel: As a kid I attended Brooklyn High, that place was like the Harvard of hip-hop. All the freshest MCs, turntables, street artists, breakdancers and beatboxers in the hood went there. It was like this giant crawfish boil of creativity, and I drank up every last drop. They were my new family, I finally felt at home someplace, a 15-year-old kid getting his b-boy education. Before long I was obsessing over every aspect of hip-hop culture. Had to have the newest beats, baddest mixes, rarest sneakers. I was consuming like crazy. Spent whatever money I had on records, shoes, clothes…people would stop me in the street just to get a look at my kicks. I won't lie, It felt good, like what I owned made me a somebody. I even started to judge others on what they had, looked down on them if they didn't measure up. Guess in some ways I still hadn't woken up, until this one day. I was out shopping in Midtown when I sensed something major was going down. Zombies were everywhere, shuffling up and down the aisles, real slow, mouths all drooling–freaked me the hell out. (chuckles) I was ready to go full apocalypse mode and start cracking skulls when one of the zombies came up and said hey. Cute girl, kinda nerdy. She explained it was performance art, a protest for 'Buy Nothing Day', part of this movement that was gaining heat back then. The way she put it really spoke to me–"consuming consumes you."

Russel: Then we hit up this free street party, met a bunch of activists with different causes but the same inner fire, the same drive for truth. It was inspiring, I felt energised, vitalised and a little bit in love. She got me seeing things differently, like, it's not all about me, y'know? There's more important shit to focus on. Hence…turning up at her place. She's helped me through the toughest of times, like after that tragic night outside 7-Eleven. You all know what happened so I won't go into detail. Del and my crew gunned down before their time, so much talent wasted. Their souls flowed into me, where they took up residence. Why was I given that burden? Why did I survive when Death was literally staring me in the face? I've never stopped looking for answers to those questions. It's what drives me, my search for a higher purpose. Whatever goes down, I've got to do right by my friends, by Noodle, use what they gave me. One journey ends, another begins. A little while later, my folks fixed for me to move to England. Guess they thought it'd be good for me, maybe even teach me some royal manners. Didn't work out like that exactly, but leaving home, leaving everything I know behind was a big deal. Me and her did stay in contact though, for all those years, from Ricks Record Shack, to Scala, to the MTV awards, we'd always stayed in touch. I even still have the plane ticket stub from the day I first left NY, to remind me: no regrets, no return, no refunds. I had to make it work but I wasn't scared. I had Brooklyn in my heart, I had my friends inside me…so to speak, like how I have Noodle now. I remember sitting in the airport, waiting for my flight, feeling kinda down. I hear this music on the loudspeakers–real faint, can't make it out. Then it hits me–Miles Davis. I'd heard that track before, when I was still a real small kid in my stroller. 'It Never Entered My Mind'. There it was, the dots connecting again. End is the beginning. As I sat there listening to that piano intro, the sad but kind of hopeful vibe, I knew that whatever happens in England, whatever fate throws my way, music is my destiny.

Russel: Always has been…When she finally opened the door, there it was again playing on her radio, Miles Davis. And for the first time in a long time, I felt the future coming on again, and it felt good. Another beginning.

April 3rd 2006 *Russel moves into his friends house in Brooklyn*

Russel: Being back at home felt weird, I really wanted to visit the old neighbourhood and see how it'd changed. They allowed me to stay at their house until I figured out my next move going forward. I had no clue what I would do next. It was tough having to decide on doing something with the rest of my life that didn't involve Gorillaz. I could've tried my hand at another solo album, but I just needed some time away from all that, live a normal life.

Russel took his time settling back into Brooklyn, meeting up with old classmates, lovers and neighbours from his troubled childhood. All of whom now saw Russel a bit differently given his new-found status.

Russel: I wasn't bullied as much as Murdoc was per se, but I wasn't exactly el presidente of the class either. My folks had me down for a lawyer or senator. Somehow, they raised the cash to send me to a private academy, the Xavier School for Young Achievers. That place was like going back in time. Uniforms hadn't changed for 300 years and the Headmaster looked like Gandalf's crooked uncle. But there were loads of kids in Brooklyn growing up who just thought I was a weirdo, someone who didn't fit in. Those were the people who gave me somewhat of a rough time in my childhood. Fast forward to now and I'm some famous musician, and they kissed the ground I walked on. They'd see me walking down the street to the store and these kids who used to gossip behind my back in school, call me names, make fun of me because of the colour of my skin, were now asking for autographs, pictures and all that shit. It was probably some of the most shallow, scummiest acts I've ever seen, and that's saying something when your bandmate is a direct descendant of one of the most evil bloodlines in history. My old friends treated me exactly the same–true, honest folks they all are. Though they didn't ignore my celebrity status entirely, they all mentioned how weird it was when they'd be walking down the street and see my face on a billboard in Times Square, or on the cover of Clash magazine. Can't say I blame 'em, I sometimes get weirded out by that too. I stayed at home for about a year, catching up on the last decade or so, but even during that period there was something building, like I had some unfinished business. The demons were screaming inside of me…

During the dead of night without warning, Russel preemptively left Brooklyn once more, leaving only a note on his bedside table…

On a chilly evening, with the voices louder than ever, Russel angrily stomped down to the local docks. Two old fishermen sat at the end of the docks–very much scared for their lives as to what this white-eyed hulk could potentially do to them. Finally and with one last breath, Russel jumped into the cold Atlantic and sank to the bottom...the voices were finally put to rest.

This is it.

The demons have chased me down and now forced my heavyweight hip hop hand. I need to get there. The expanse, the calm of the eternal briny deep. The Ocean...

The.... Ocean.... b. bacon....

So this is it....

I throw myself into the sea. X

Russel Hobbs

Chapter 3
An Album in the Making

'Sing yourself
Out of depression, rise above
Always searching if I know your heart
Electric is the love'

The Recording of 'Plastic Beach'

Alas! With a bottle of rum in his hand, El Diablo hanging off his neck, a psychotic demented cyborg on his left, and a damaged blue haired singer on his right. Murdoc Niccals had reformed what he could of 'Gorillaz'. The basic sonic foundations were laid and before long Murdoc had the outline for a new & fantastic epic Long Playing record. Extra collaborators were shipped in to add additional colours and species; All 'Grade A' cohorts in the form of Chicago horn sections, Syrian orchestras, half of The Clash, zithers, farfisas and more…

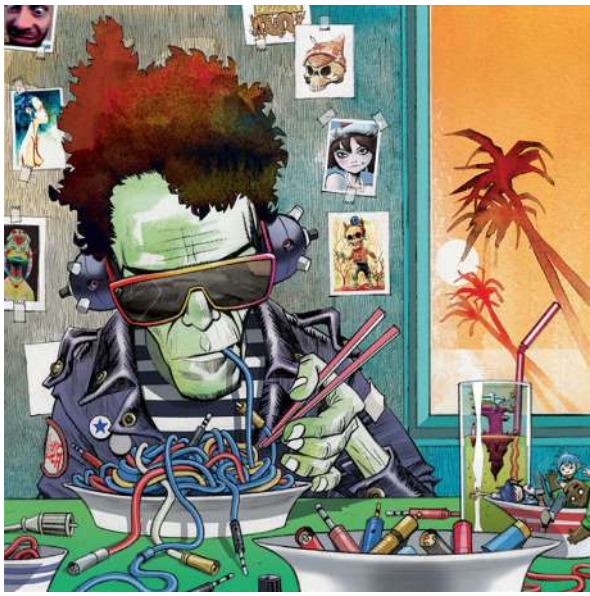
Murdoc: Couldn't grab ahold of Russel, He's suffered from bouts of demonic possession for the last few years and this time I just couldn't find him...I must admit though, I didn't really try. I programmed the drums for Plastic Beach myself using my very own DRUM-O-MATIC. I also did use a fair amount of Russel's drum takes. Bits and pieces of his that I've recorded over the years.... Some of it's even from his solo album that never got finished. Great stuff...now that would have been an exceptional album, probably would've launched his solo career, but now it's a Gorillaz record! So boo hoo for him. Drummers are ten a penny, anyway. Still, I miss the big guy. Well, "miss"-ish. He'll turn up when he's ready...but he's not getting any royalties!

2D: You seem pretty unphased by his disappearance…

Murdoc: No, seriously. I just didn't need Russel. Or Noodle. I can just build as many cyborg clones of them as I want. But y'know I've noticed this mysterious brown dome, way, way off in the distance...it seems to be inching closer and closer to the island.... Still, probably nothing eh? The chances of that dome turning out to be Russel's big bald head is ridiculous...isn't it? So yeah, drummers? Who needs 'em? Let's talk about the record, yeah? Plastic Beach wasn't going to be a green record. It was going to be a soundtrack for a plastic beach. It's taking little snapshots of many, many places around the world and then sticking them all together on a billboard so you can see how they all fit. It's not a judgement on the world. It's just a picture.

Parping his dirty noise all around the world, This is the third act in the sprawling epic that is Gorillaz.

Murdoc: We've blossomed from a concept into a concrete institution. Now we're a household name, a brand that you can stamp on any record and it gives a mark of confidence. If you look and listen closely to all three albums, you'll notice that there's an evolution, a growth and a narrative that you'd never get with any other band. It's how I always planned it. I, like the world, am a work in progress, teetering, twittering, on the tightrope of evolution, bolstered by rum and tinctures, easing my way into an early grave, and trying to wring as much fun out of the present sunshine as possible, like anybody else. But the headstone should read well. I described this piece, this album, like the third panel of the Gorillaz triptych. Plastic Beach is my third most glorious panel…



ABOVE
Lou Reed eating a cable soup.
"Easy there Lou... don't eat them all at once"
MURDOC NICCALS

2D: The album gives off a feeling of curse and darkness. As if the music on this album carried with it a message of doom, of bad omens. There is something desolate in the landscapes. It makes listeners think of what the last day on earth will be like: messy, violent. The unease it gives off is like breathing thick air. It's very strange.

Murdoc: Ah, well... the air in 'Plastic Beach' is quite thick, very...viscous. Heavy, like a sticky fog. But yes, I think that's a fair opinion, even if it is from the likes of 2D. All landscapes have some element of desolation And 'Plastic Beach' has some dark themes. Peppered with light and hope and optimism, too, so it's not all that bad, you know? Kind of like life itself, isn't it? Not to mention Judgement Day, I do think it looks like a slide of where we are in the world right now, it's a microcosm of the real world....with a couple of cuts for advertising…

Unlike their previous two records, Plastic Beach marked the first Gorillaz studio album in which the band received no outside help producing. The tracklists & sound design was coordinated by Murdoc himself.

Murdoc: Dan The Automator worked on the first album and Danger Mouse directed 'Demon Days'. I decided to call the shots myself this time. I wanted to create an album that unites not only different elements, or different genres, but also places. If you can bring different elements, styles and places together and make them work together, surely that is a great step towards peace. Empathy, knowing what the topic is about, right?

2D: That's a topic that you've never been able to grasp.

Murdoc: Lots of other people have called Plastic Beach, uh...long and messy in ambition and execution. But then again, we live in a world that suffers from severe attention deficit disorder and where anything that goes over thirty seconds and doesn't explode into technicolour digital glitter every two seconds is considered hard to catch.

RIGHT
Wave of collaborators
"He's gonna need a bigger boat."
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc: Or indulgent. Sometimes, you need to listen to something at least a couple of times in order to catch the potential that guards the groove and the brilliance. It's an album that took me two years to create so I don't think it's too much to ask that people listen to it once or twice, at least. Even though the record has bits of it all over the world, it's all channelled through my very unique and idiosyncratic British sensibility. My fingerprints are on each and every one of the tracks on the album and that's why it sounds cohesive. Everything goes through my hands. MY JOB.

2D: I must admit, I was a bit taken back by the demo's Murdoc was working on. I always knew Murdoc was of some musical prowess, but I didn't think he was capable of writing anything like what I heard.

Murdoc: To help out with the technical side, I gassed and shipped out Jason Cox and Stephen Shedwig. Two studio technicians from Damon Albarn's heiring. I had them locked inside our studio for weeks, they lived off little pieces of flam I had saved in my drawer, just poked the stuff through the keyhole, you could hear them nibbling away at it like little ferrets. Good stuff. Over the months, the melodies for a new album came into focus and the songs demanded to be... finessed and defined. Like errant children. Full of potential but with nappies full of excrement. I treat my record collection like a menu: I'll have the Snoop Dogg with a little dollop of Lou Reed on the side. I sent out a whole load of 'Golden Tickets' to them; sparkly invites with our secret Plastic Beach location embossed on them. It had the map details, dress code, and the meeting place watermarked on there, so the guests would know what was up. But it wasn't all plain sailing. A couple of them refused, so I had to resort to Plan B: chloroform and Rohypnol. But as long as I got what I needed, I was fine. For many people a Gorillaz collaboration is like a ticket to Disneyland. It's a day off, they can get to take part in this surreal little ghostly theme park that seems to sail round the world with me, Murdoc Niccals, at the helm... Not many people refuse an invitation.

Now all Murdoc needed to acquire was the musical cohorts necessary to fully fulfil his vision, Sending out his golden tickets, Murdoc was able to assemble a league of musicians to appear on his plastic record.

Murdoc: I started with just a few sketches, musical lines to guide me and then, little by little, the album began to grow and became this giant musical map. Like a musical map of the world. Then I realised that it was missing parts and that it needed a bit of Syria in some bits. Something of the gritty soul of New York. Something British, something from Sweden. So the collaborators were chosen like colours, colours to fill a spectrum, different characters in the story. You see the whole narrative needs to feel complete. Each of those collaborators comes with such beautiful baggage, half the job's done as soon as they open their mouths. They represent different elements of a story. They're triggers. I wanted the record to feel like a little piece of the world, and to get it, that's what you have to do, join pieces of the balloon with adhesive tape...then everything started to make sense, and that was something I didn't like, either. So I made something new. Snoop is the master of ceremonies, hosting the introduction. Bashy and Kano the sound of British youth bursting over the rich lush heritage of the Syrian orchestra. Mark E Smith the toothless barking pirate ship that blows into Plastic Beach. Bobby Womack the oceanic voice of soul love and street politics. Mos Def the sassy hip New York rapper. Yukimi from Little Dragon the gentle female lullaby, a healing breeze; Lou Reed the wizened old New York curmudgeon, rattling tales of pills and plastics and girls. Each part helps the picture become complete.

Murdoc had recording sessions with many musicians for his project, Sinfonia ViVa, Snoop Dogg, National Orchestra for Arabic Music, Kano, Bashy, Paul Simonon & Mick Jones of The Clash, Mos Def, Bobby Womack, De La Soul. Gruff Rhys of Super Furry Animals, Mark E. Smith, Little Dragon, and Lou Reed. That's only naming the artists that actually made it onto the final cut of the record, rumours began circulating early on of a collaboration with Southend-on-Sea's very own 'The Horrors'.

Murdoc: Mmm...yeah well after the Zane Lowe thing on Radio 1 I was contacted by the Child Support Agency. They track down wayward daddies, right? They wanted to talk to me about this group of...er... goth kids, 'The Horrors'. Turns out, DNA tests and everything, that I'm their dad. Their biological father! Five separate kids from five different mothers, who'd have thunk it? Three of them I can't even remember...But the fact that they all grew up and met each other and formed a band, and it's actually good...well...what are the chances? Anyway, they said I owed them about £500,000 each in unpaid Child Support…maintenance. Then it hit me like an anvil on the top of my pretty black-haired bonce...I know what I'll do! I'll stick them on the record. Forget the 500 grand each, they can be on my new album...so I sent them out a golden ticket each, and shipped the little buggers out to the island...there they were. The very first guests to be invited over to record on Plastic Beach. Surprisingly the track turned out to be a monster. A whale of a tune. 'Leviathan!' and, instead of flinging it in the bin, I kept it. Actually that track was the inspiration, the springboard for the whole new album. I was so full of excitement, my body was vibrating...just humming. MMMGGGGGGNNNNHGGGG!!! Might have just been the rum though....anyway, 'The Horrors' stuck around for a few weeks before I had them boxed up and freighted back to Blighty... lovely boys.

Up next, Syria, March 2009, to record with The National Orchestra Of Arabic Music.

Murdoc: I had to be in disguise because of all of these elements that were after me...I chose a black burka as my disguise. I was able to get them to record the lush and hypnotic Arabic orchestral part that you hear on 'White Flag'. I've always been a fan of Arabic music, and I know I wanted that part of the world on my record. While I was over there various guides took me around the city. Which was an eye-opener...y'know, the Israelis like to fly their jets really low over the cities once a month. It's called "sabre-rattling", buzzing the towns in order to pop out the windows. If they fly low and fast enough, it creates a sonic boom effect, taking out all the windows in the area. It's a part of the atmosphere, and the relentless campaign to keep the city on its toes. The city is like Port Royal, the old pirate town. Basically you can kind of get what you want, if you want to party in a war zone. Which I guess I did, in my own unique and singular style. What a fantastic piece to lay on a so-called "pop album"... It's fundamental to open people's ears up to this aspect of the world...because if you only read the papers or watch the TV the impression you get is so very different. So it's important to stick things like this out there, just erode all this misinformation ...GORILLAZ: we're a public service! But I wasn't stopping here.

Murdoc continued his album recording tour by making his way to Derbyshire, England, in April 2009.

Murdoc: Next on my orchestra agenda was recruiting the Sinfonia Viva. The group performed what would be the track 'Pirates Progress', however we later cut the track down and used it as intro for the album. They also provided an orchestral section for the track 'Cloud Of Unknowing.' I can't remember too much about these sessions other than the weather was abysmal in Derby. I recorded with them in the old Rolls Royce engine factory, where they built the engines for the World War II spitfires...which strangely enough kind of fits the soul of all this...a bygone era, the remnants of war and planes and decay... It turned out nice again, though... So that's alright.

Later that same month, Murdoc returned to London, near Ladbroke Grove, to do recording sessions with none other than Paul Simonon and Mick Jones of The Clash.

Murdoc: Getting Paul Simonon and Mick Jones in took it up another gear. Now I'm the Gorillaz bass player, and that ain't gonna change. But I thought, if I could get those two back in a studio together, first time since The Clash, I'll play kazoo or some other piece of rubbish. For me the Clash were atomic, they were like what the scientists are doing at CERN in Geneva, smashing 800m protons into each other to recreate the events at the beginning of time. 'Clampdown', 'Safe European Home', 'Bankrobber' and 'Train In Vain' are all in my desert island discs, the ones I sailed to my own plastic beach. I used my Jan Hammer records as a paddle when I lost my oar, so obviously they don't mean as much to me. They sum up the grey skies of west London and the sunshine heat of Jamaica in the same three chords. The Clash were very smart lyrically, and more ambitious in their subject matter than your usual top forty contestant.

Mick Jones: I umm-ed and ahh-ed when I was approached, as I always do, but it seemed interesting and contemporary and I was keen to work with Paul Simonon. I like the idea of a cartoon band. I liked the Beatles cartoons when they were on. The Jackson 5 had one, too. There was never an offer for a Clash cartoon, funnily enough. Our song's the title track. What's it sound like? It's like an island continent, a plastic beach, maybe, with some submarine sounds. And I know it's not a recognised genre of music. It's a few years since Paul and I played together, and that was at a wedding. It was a nice experience to look over my shoulder and see him. We didn't argue as much as we used to. We were wrapped up on our track in a day, no nonsense, and then went down the pub for a pint.

The next stop saw Murdoc returning to The Big Apple, New York, to do recording sessions with several collaborators such as Mos Def, Lou Reed, and the Hypnotic Brass Ensemble in May, 2009.

Murdoc: I rented out Chung King Studios in New York, and sat down with Mos Def. First time I sat down with him since our meet up at The Box in 2006, he's 'most definitely' in the premier league. That's indisputable. I love 'Ms Fat Booty' and 'UMI Says' and the heavier stuff from his 'The Ecstatic' album. Mos is a smart guy who casts his eye over most areas, including the rockier sides of music. When he raps you believe him, when he acts you believe in it.

ABOVE
"There's Snoop Diggity Dogg atop his hotbox submarine."
MURDOC NICCALS

Mos Def: Without sounding hyperbolic, I think that Plastic Beach is one of the greatest pop albums ever. It's going to extend the legacy of Gorillaz in a very positive way. I'm on two tracks, though it doesn't do any service to these songs for me to give a verbal description. I haven't really heard popular music like this before.

Murdoc: We had the Hypnotic Brass Ensemble from Chicago come in next and do their bits. The entire group provided backing brass for a few of the tracks on the album. Particularly, Welcome To The World of Plastic Beach and Sweepstakes.

2D: They also provided brass for the tracks Broken and Electric Shock, but you can't hear them cos they got cut from the album last minute by some gimp in a sailors hat.

Murdoc: It's my album, not yours, if you want the Hypnotic Brass Ensemble on Broken, do it in your own time. The last person we met up with was Lou Reed, he was fun. He was bouncing around the room like Christopher Biggins. We talked about his range of spectacles, I guess they just help him to look at things in a different way. He did push me very hard in the face a couple of times though. I was probably standing in his way. There's a certain process you have to go through to understand who's in the room with many of these legends. He's not going to run around trying to make friends with everyone. Some of them just want to test the water, see where they stand before they feel comfortable with the whole thing. For people who don't know, the way Gorillaz go about things, and how we appear, can seem to some like they might be being set up for a Candid Camera stunt. But once they hear the music, and know it's for real they usually know we're all good.

Following the recording sessions in New York, Murdoc decided to treat himself by having a little fun at the Glastonbury Festival in June, 2009.

Murdoc: I needed 50 Cc's of a Brompton cocktail and a ticket to Pilton STAT. I was only just coming down from my three year bender and didn't want the buzz to stop…mhhm...I've gone into the future…but was I shocked to learn that my arch nemesis, Blur, was headlining the gig. I THOUGHT THOSE GUYS BROKE UP YEAAAAARRRRS AGO! So, I made a hasty change of plans. Sold my ticket to this Jeb on the street and that was that, what is the big issue anyway? While Damon was busy bumming Graham Coxon, I decided instead to head over to his studio and, ahem, borrow some of his demos. A smart business decision I assure you. Damon and his little bitch Jamie Hewlett were working on this Carousel project and some elements had a very particular resonance in my muddy spirit: the melancholy of the docks on the sea, with the fairs in ruins and the abandoned merry-go-rounds... So I took advantage that Blur was too busy with the tour to sneak in, steal the tracks from their hard drive, destroy their copy, and run to the beach. I took what I needed, threw the rest in the bin, and added it to Plastic Beach. What Damon had done was very suggestive, very moving, but he needed balls nonetheless. I don't know how the Blur members reacted. To tell the truth, I don't frequent them much. The combination of Damon's Carousel project, some Arabic orchestra music I had pilfered and the demo tracks I've recorded so far gave my album three strong separate flavours... angles to come from. I had my Bermuda Triangle. My plastic beach vision.

Murdoc: I decided to head back to the island, mess around with the Carousel tracks, and send Cyborg off to recruit some more collaborators. I literally gave her a grocery list of collaborators I wanted.

With Chloroform and machine gun in hand, Cyborg sped off in a little speed boat.

Murdoc: While she was away some collaborators came to the island on their own, one of which was Snoop Dogg. He told me that my Plastic Bizzle was the shizzle. I suspect that running into fully-animated walking, talking cartoons on a giant piece of floating plastic in the middle of nowhere isn't the type of thing that would faze a man like Snoop. He just cruised up to shore, enshrouded with plumes of smoke and pimp fur, looked around and said, 'Welcome to the world of the Plastic Beach'. I used that for the opening number. It sounded snappy. Gruff Rhys was next, he showed up in a little submarine.

Gruff Rhys: I've always admired Gorillaz. I think the thing that makes them so special is the insanity of it all. Not many people could pull it off - the sound, the concept, the people they've roped in. The first I heard was a telegram from Murdoc. It was quite a feat finding their studio because it's not on the map. Even Google doesn't know where it is.

Gruff Rhys: In fact, the second time I was due to go there I didn't even manage to show up. I ended up singing and playing guitar on a couple songs. The first is Jellyfish, which is a breakfast song, a breezy, early morning track that makes you want to eat cornflakes. I'm possibly on a song called Leviathan, too. That was more of a night-time song, a three o'clock in the morning, speeding down the autobahn evading West German police-type track.

Murdoc: That was an oddly specific way to describe the song.

2D: Mark E. Smith tried to ram raid the island. He sailed in on the ghostly pirate ship and tried to smash his way into the recording room.

Murdoc: 'Cruiser's Creek', 'Living Too Late', 'Mr Pharmacist', 'There's A Ghost In My House'. I'm a Fall fan! Mark is the soul of belligerence, the chairman of the opposition, an educated belch from the north; he's the black wind of doom, the roaring cantankerous pirate trader; he'll grab you in your sleep, stick you in the hold, and put you to work on his rum-sodden pirate ship. Apparently he's only got one chair in his house, cos he doesn't like other people. I can understand that. I had to sit on his lap. Eventually throughout the weeks, we started getting shipments from Cyborg. She was sending the collaborators in big FedEx crates, she also sent us postcards with each collaborator, explaining what time to feed them, when they need to be taken out for a walk, she's very thoughtful like that. The first two who were shipped out were Kano and Bashy.

Kano: The track I'm on is called White Flag. I've never heard anything like it before. It's got me and Bashy rapping on it but it's not a grime sound. It's very uplifting, it makes you smile. I'm pretty sure we're going to be the first people ever to rap over The National Orchestra Of Arabic Music. I've been a Gorillaz fan since Demon Days. When I got the opportunity to be a part of it I knew it had to be done. Me and Bashy were sick with the flu when we were in the studio. We weren't feeling great, the music was out of our comfort zone, it could have been a complete disaster. But Murdoc says we captured something that day. He says it's amazing.

ABOVE
Gang o' Pirates.
"That parrot's face... so familiar... yet so wrong"
2D

Murdoc: It IS amazing. After we did recording sessions we had a little fun time in the snow. I threw a snowball right in Kano's face, I was wondering why nobody was throwing any back, then I remembered the tranquiliser gun I was holding.

2D: I don't know why you were celebrating, sure it was pretty. But global warming is gonna kill us all if we don't-

Murdoc: (in a singing angelic tone) -SHUTTTTTT YOURRRRR FACEEEEEEE……..

2D: Ugh. The next shipment crate that came was Little Dragon. Yukimi.

Yukimi Nagano: Plastic Beach will be so much bigger than an album because there are so many different angles to it. Walking into their studio was like walking into a playground - there were instruments from all around the world and an ocean of synthesisers. We were in awe of it all, hungry to try them all out. We worked on a couple different things, writing and coming up with ideas. Everything was very spontaneous and playful. One had kind of a heavy beat and a repetitive sense to it, the other one was more of a classic pop song. It was a really relaxed, very chilled atmosphere. There was a lot of table tennis being played. Who was the best? Murdoc had the skills - I guess he's been practising. And the guys in my band are bad losers.

Murdoc: Oooh…Yukimi, dear, you know about my feeling down there…Oh…OH…let's keep this strictly professional, ey? Arhahaha!

2D: I don't remember her sayin' that.

Murdoc: D, can you take a look at my knuckles for a second? I think my skins turning green again.

2D: Uh, yeah sure I- AGH!

Murdoc: Serves you right, twatter.

Kelvin "Posdnous" Mercer: It was a no-brainer to work with Gorillaz again. Feel Good Inc. opened up a whole new crazy bunch of opportunities for us. We've been initiated as honorary Gorillaz. It's a pleasure to be called that and fit into their mad world. The main track we're on is Superfast Jellyfish. We spent a week in the studio in total and tried a few ideas There were so many ideas flowing out, we heard all these different things that were possible to do. As a band, De La Soul feels similar to Gorillaz; we work in a similar way. They know how to manipulate music, they know that a voice can be an instrument, like we do. We ended up working on three tracks. There was Electric Shock, a great song that was never finished, another called Float Tropics that was incredible, like club music, a cool, bass-filled, loopy song.

Pos: I was drinking a lot of nettle tea during the sessions. and then the track that's on the album, Superfast Jellyfish, which sounds like a souped-up, underwater commercial. It's a short but fatty song. The title alone called out, lyrically, for something funny. It sounded like a cool kids' commercial. We didn't know which track would make it. But a month or so later we heard Superfast Jellyfish and it sounded amazing. It has a funny taste, like there's a little bit of sea in it…Gorillaz are part of our lives now; we'll always feel part of what they do. They're family! Murdoc always wants to challenge what's brought to Gorillaz - he's very demanding. We want to get him involved in our next album. It's time he returned the favour.

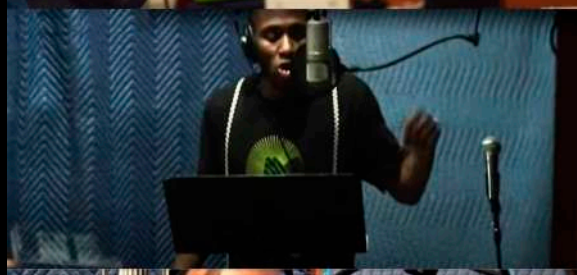
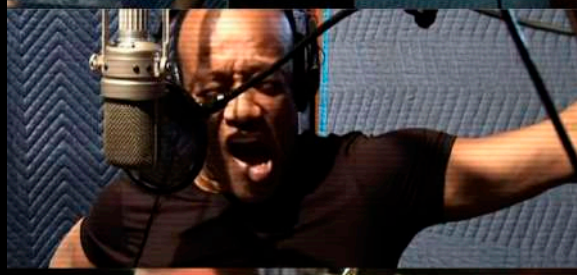
Murdoc: I'm afraid Murdoc Niccals can't come to the phone right now. Please leave a message after the beep. BEEPPPPPPP!

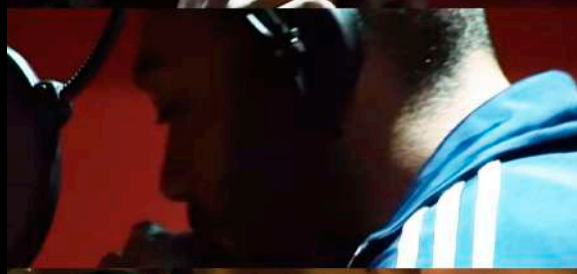
Eventually, Cyborg returned to the island, needing to recharge after weeks of kidnapping artists. However, Murdoc was shocked to find out that she had missed one artist on the list, a crucial element in his plan.

Murdoc: I can't believe she missed Bobby Womack off the list. I had to take both her and 2D to America to kidnap him myself. That's a story for later though….The whole thing of Plastic Beach is that we are close to just overload generally, in the world. I always like to get this sort of social realism, a parallel of love. People like Bobby Womack is where I got that thing from. So I just needed to have him on the record. He brings that magnificent, oceanic 70s soul power to the table and he still looks great, rocking a leather jacket and shades. I'm 20 years younger but my skin looks like green pock-marked leather compared to his.

2D: Working with Bobby was an experience I'll never forget. We just pointed him in the way of the mic booth and sketched out a rough picture of what Plastic Beach was and what it represented to us, but he put his heart and his soul into it. In fact, he'd been singing full blast for about 45 minutes, just unleashing a hurricane of emotion, 'It just tore the roof off'.

Murdoc: You sit his soul vocal next to Mos Def's rap and 2D's purer melodic tone, all over a digital version of Chic, and you've got Studio 2010. Something new, fresh and expansive. D'you get me?



Bobby Womack: I never heard of Gorillaz before I got the call. I got hold of their material and it was just so different I thought it would be a spark for me - a lift and a challenge. Cutting Stylo was like nothing I've done before. They told me to sing whatever was on my mind. I was in there for an hour going crazy about love and politics, getting it off my chest. I'm diabetic, and after an hour I could feel myself passing out. Last thing I remember is thinking, Lord, don't let this happen to me. They walked me to the couch and gave me a banana. In two or three minutes, I woke up and said, Let's go again. They said, No, we got it on tape. I know I musta freaked them out because it freaked me out. Murdoc kept a straight face. He said, I'm telling you, man, you're my idol. I said, "Well, don't kill your idol!".

Murdoc: Someone who's lived and loved like Bobby has some incredible stories, but I couldn't repeat any without securing some sort of extended jail term, especially for the one about Janis Joplin that's actually sort of illegal.

2D: It was nice to learn his daughter was actually a fan of ours.

Bit-by-bit, Murdoc's album came together. However, some collaborators who were invited just didn't work out.

Murdoc: Barry Gibb turned up to sing, but he had an ear infection. A 'Garry Bibb', it turned out. He picked it when he swam over to Plastic Beach. He looks like Dog The Bounty Hunter now. I tried getting Lady GaGa, Beyonce, and Katy Perry all on the record, badly.

2D: Did you really want them on the album Plastic Beach? Or did you just want just them on the Plastic Beach?

Murdoc: We actually had John Lennon on the record at one point, He came to Plastic Beach, floating in from across the ether, but I thought that one was a bit far fetched even for my standards. So, I knocked that one off.

2D: Cher washed up on Plastic Beach

Murdoc: Oh yeah, but I shipped her back…

Upon completion of the album, mumbles began to spread that this would be the final jewel in the crown that was the Gorillaz discography. In retrospect we know of course that this was no more than a clever marketing manoeuvre by the gleaming, overbearing, face of the band, Niccals himself.

Murdoc: Of course it was rubbish, It's a time-honoured trick. Jay-Z retiring from music, the last Streets album, Led Zeppelin never to re-form, The Libertines split... sooner or later, these things come back together with great aplomb. You're no one until you split up and re-form, are you? It just ramps up the drama when you do return. I can reveal, though, categorically, Dawn Of The Ogre will be the last Gorillaz book ever released. You've heard it from me... direct. But you know, if this were to be my final album, I think I'd be most proud of rubbing out these boundaries. Making rappers work with rockers and old soul heads, putting them with animators, writers, those... technology gonks. I see the phrase 'Gorillaz-style project' in every cross-genre, multi-person collaboration now. They always miss the point. It always just sounds like the inside of a pub to me. Look, I've done my best here. The grand finale. My requiem. The rest is up to you.

2D: Is this really the last Gorillaz album? Can I go home?

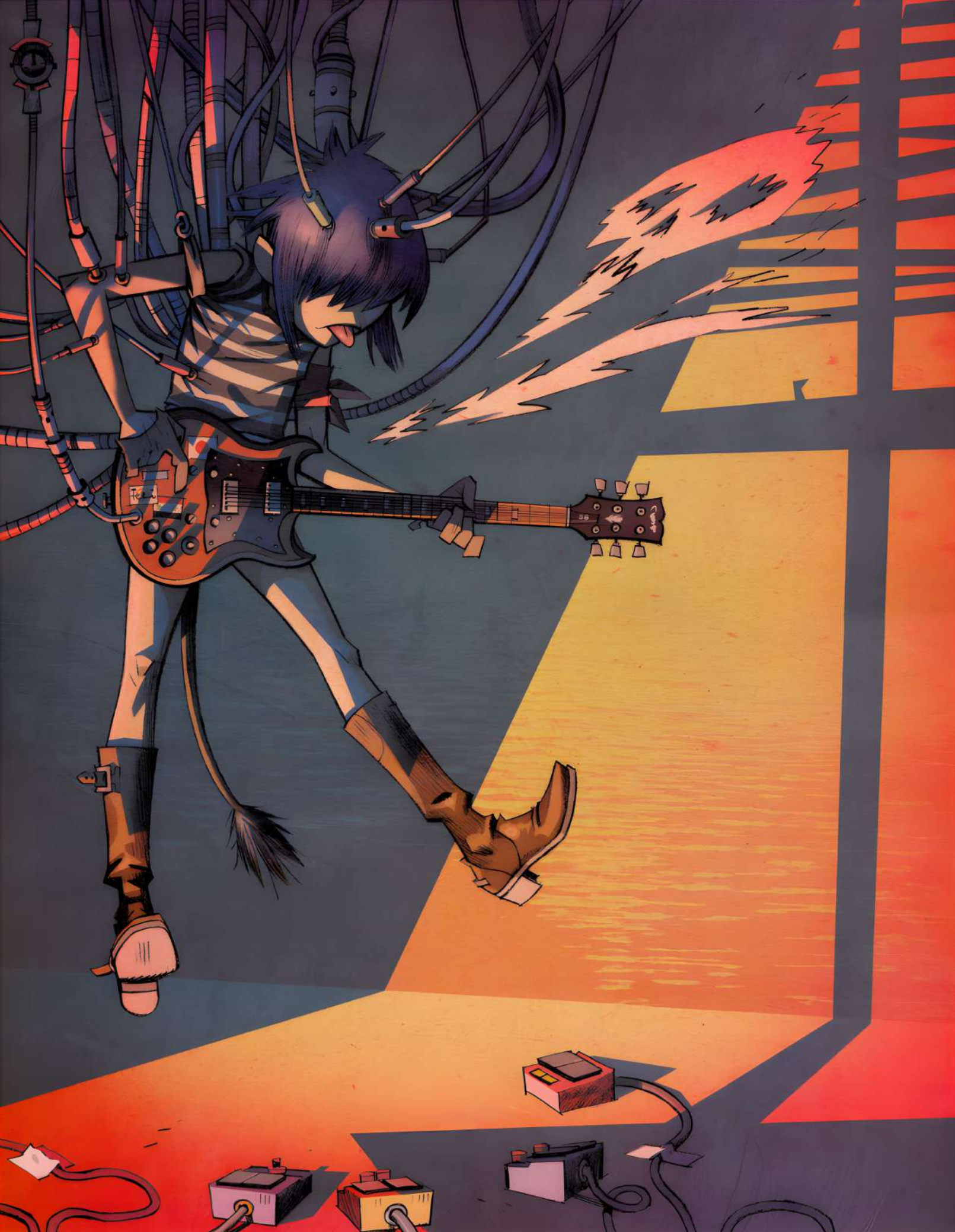
Murdoc: Mmm... think it'd be hard to top this one at the moment. But every album I enter is made as if it's my very first and very last. It's the only way to work. I'll say yep now. It feels complete... today. But I might have another one in the bag already. You'll have to wait and find out.

Finally, after two years in the making, Murdoc had what he needed for his record.
The Plastic Beach soundtrack was officially complete.

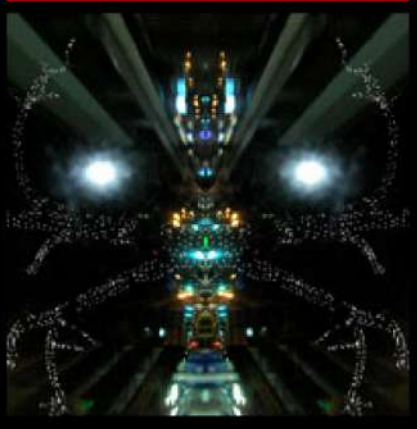
Murdoc: Final thoughts? Well, it might just be the missing part of the jigsaw, real fans will know what I'm talking about, you know? Oh, and yeah, there is one other thing, Plastic Beach, this place I'm on. I think there is something very odd going on here. You see, I just noticed, and it's easy enough to point out, that each leap of evolution and innovation have been shorter, and shorter amount of time. The universe was created 14 billion years ago. Earth 4 1/2 billion years. Man arrived in its earlier state about 4.5 million years ago. And then we evolved into this state, Homo sapiens, around 200 thousand years ago. The earliest cities appeared around 6-7 thousand years ago over in Mesopotamia. And then we've been at war, ever since really, right up until the last 100 years. Then we really kicked off. Population of the planet had gone from 1 billion to 7 billion in the last 100 years. And every single piece of digital information and technology has exploded in this last century. We are crammed packed and it's getting more and more. Escalating. The overload. Humanity is now squeezed into this tiny plastic bubble. Everything getting faster and faster, whirling towards an inevitable conclusion. A single point on the horizon, or in the middle of the ocean, say. The entirety of time and history and evolution is heading towards a certain point. Point Nemo. Plastic Beach. That's what Plastic Beach is,
I reckon, the end of days, the point of no return. It's right here. It's right now. It's upon us. The future has finally come on, today... Does that make sense?

Alright, let's see what you've got.

Murdoc: Oh… oh no… please sweet Satan no. Not this. Anything but this… I bloody hate these track by tracks. Christ, alright... At least it's my album this time.



Plastic Beach Song by Song



ORCHESTRAL INTRO

Murdoc: I needed something other-wordly to open the record. This album was quite a while in the making and it called for a big opener, like the big reveal on a Korean drama it needed to be portentous, vast and… well, oceanic. But graceful. Like the morphine's just gently kicking in as the listener glides into the plastic bay. Mmmm.

2D: This is a shorter version of Pirate's Progress which was the Japanese exclusive bonus track recorded with Sinfonía Viva Orchestra in Derby.

Murdoc: And then we get into the plasticky stuff, the digital.... Vocoded emotion, the album's evolving into plastic... Hurry Up!!! QUICK!!!

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE PLASTIC BEACH

We open with a brass ensemble revving up. This is a proper soundtrack: brass-laden, pimped out, plastic funk, mixing the organic with the plastic to form something new and shiny. And who would be better to open up this world than Snoop Dogg?

Murdoc: Snoop is unveiling the show here, he is the boss dog, my host, the introductory MC if you will, as you land on the island he welcomes you aboard to the world of Plastic Beach. Snoop's the grandaddy, isn't he? 'Doggystyle' was for many people the record that got them into rap and G-funk. The track also features the Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, a Chicago nine-piece brass group featuring eight sons of the great Phil Cohran, he played trumpets with The Sun Ra Arkestra.

2D: This was one of the many tracks that we got that freaky robot on to provide some backing vocals. I was able to hook up a microphone to her, you could just talk through it and that would come out of the speakers, like a con-co-conduit, my voice but all dodgy, robotic. It's a trick we used a few times on this record, and it sounds wicked.

Cyborg Noodle: ZZZzzztt…Crackle…He was a perfect gentleman although I believe he gets up even later than Murdoc. Which is late. His contribution was ideal for our track 'Welcome to the World of the Plastic Beach'; he plays the part of the master of ceremonies, welcoming the listener to our world. Which is appropriate since his records were for many people the obvious way into rap music in the 1990s. I see him as being part of a lineage which stretches all the way from Sly and the Family Stone, the idea of mixing genres, styles, peoples. Continents, and bringing it all together to make something fresh and vibrant, something colourful.

Murdoc: What the fuck? I didn't know you could talk. This could've come in handy much earlier.

Welcome To The World introduces the listener to the realm of this plastic island. Setting up the stage and mood. Snoop lectures through rap that the younger generation needs to have hope and help clean up the mess that we have started.

WHITE FLAG

The track's first minute consists of a beautifully composed symphony performed by the National Orchestra for Oriental Arabic Music, before we are dumped right into the middle of a dance rave with Kano and Bashy.

Murdoc: The recording sessions in Beirut and Syria got rolled into various themes on the album. The British counterpart would be in charge of the also British grime artists Bashy and Kano. I spotted Kano when Damon worked with him on a track called 'London Town'. I like to keep my ear to the ground, I can't really help it sometimes because, quite frequently, I wake up to find myself slumped there, on the ground. The duo came out to Plastic Beach via shipment crate and their first reactions were recorded live as they hit the shores. Those lyrics, those raps were literally the first words those two spoke. They didn't know exactly where they were or what to expect. So, I crow-barred open the crate and as they set foot on the jetty, I shoved a mic into their faces and recorded their reaction, into my silly little tape recorder. Ta Da! Never-er a truer rap spoken. They described the scene as if they just hit town like a lonely cowboy, or a whirlwind, a grimy wind blowing dance hall music over arabic orchestras, just like that. I think though that Kano and Bashy nailed the optimism and potential of Plastic Beach just right in their little skit, what they brought to this track was perfect. This track was so good I actually had it play on loop in the lobby of Plastic Beach. It's very fitting for that sort of thing.

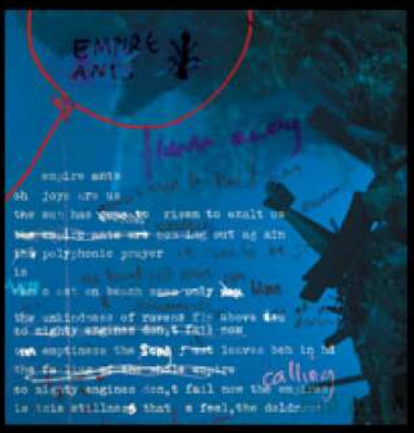
2D: The original demo for this track felt more like your standardised hype song. The first half of this song, and the second half were both actually for completely different tracks recorded, we decided to-

Murdoc: We?

2D: We decided to mix the two tracks together, blending two different genres and cultures, with some 8 bit bloops and beeps here and there for good measure.

Murdoc: We are on a plastic beach. There's no violence here! No guns! No war! I mean yeah there could be a killer robot here topped to the brim with weapons...and a mafia group after me….and a demon out for my soul…...and a blue haired singer who I abuse on the daily… but other than that it's paradise, right?

RHINESTONE EYES



Next we have 'Rhinestone Eyes', the rejected fourth single of the album.

Murdoc: This one was recorded in my little submarine. I've got this little personal submarine that I use to scoot round the Bay. I put 2D in it one day and took him for a spin, through all the murky quagmire of Plastic Beach.

2D: Even though I was terrified I managed to free-style this one.

Murdoc: I looped up the sonar noises my boat was making, made it into a rhythm and 2D just mumbled over the backing track. I soared round the sub-aquatic terrain and he sang his little mantra, about gargoyles and factories and electric towers and whatever...Came out quite well, don't you think?.... 2D at his most wistful and boy-ish…

2D: Sod off, you old goth.

Murdoc: I took a bit of Damons 'Electric Shock' track, and stuck it in here....with a little delay over the top. I think my sub's probably the most indulgent 'rock star' item I've bought to date... but it's essential round these parts. as the world gets wetter, and dry land gets scarcer that "70%" of water on the earth surface is beginning to look like a great big splashy playground. Vast areas of ripe 'underwater real estate' going untouched. To navigate these new terrains, you need something zippy to get around in, right? Now personal submarines aren't exactly new, I've had loads for ages, but the tipping point will come when someone starts mass-producing these things, making them affordable to all. It's all going to kick off in the ocean world. Yeah, of course there's going to be a whole load of accidents at first. Well, fatalities probably. Y'know, kids joy riding, underwater pile-ups, water rage, etc... but the long term prospects? Very exciting. A sparkly new future! But yeah, that was Rhinestone Eyes. I recorded it underwater. And it turned out all good....

STYLO

Stylo is a hyper speed run through flying fish, cars, and electricity.

2D: This was a new sound for Gorillaz. An electro-ish sound, with a little bit of politics and a lot of soul going down.

Murdoc: With 'Stylo' I wanted the music to feel euphoric, whilst still putting across how precarious our tightly packed situation was back then worldwide. And still is, actually. The funny thing is, since man could pick up a pen and put his thoughts on paper we've always had a sense of the Apocalyptic. An imminent Doomsday...but y'know....yeah...I think something's got to give...It's like rubbing the impossible to burst!

2D: The goal was for the audience to understand where we are at as a species on this overpopulated planet. 'Overload. Overload. Overload. Coming on to the-'. Bobby Womack's chorus just explodes into the track. This was his first recording in almost 20 years, a real honour.

Murdoc: This song is just total crack funk.

2D: What's crack funk?

Murdoc: Crack funk is something I came up with after a few too many rum 'n' cokes. Bobby Womack cut the theme of one of the greatest blaxploitation films ever made: 'Across 110th Street'. This song definitely borrows some of the grammar of that style. 'Across 110th Street' is a song and film beamed from a city in distress: New York in the 1970s, when it was a dark place, glamorously decayed, on the verge of AIDS and the crack epidemic. It was about to commit a kind of ha-ri-kari that led eventually to Giuliani and zero tolerance and money and 9/11….

2D: Er….

Murdoc: Have I gone too far? It was just meant to be a cool phrase to describe a cool tune. Shoot me. Getting Bobby Womack onto Plastic Beach for this track was a bit of a hefty task for us, it was well worth it though. Mos Def also drops some vocals onto this track as well, He's a great, great rapper, great actor and a really vibrant presence. And him and Bobby work really well with 2D here, so the whole track came together.

SUPERFAST JELLYFISH

Heading into track 6, the second single off the record. We arrive at the album's quick cut to a message from our sponsors. With an advertisement promoting a fast food home cooked meal of creatures named the Superfast Jellyfish.

Murdoc: This is one of the first songs I wrote off this album. I came up with the idea not long after I found Plastic Beach. It's a proven statistic that 'SuperFast Jellyfish' is the fastest food known to man. I didn't know this piece of information until I read it in a leaflet. About maybe 20,000 of these leaflets washed up on the Plastic Beach. All adverts for this 'Superfast Jellyfish' fast-food chain. Maybe it didn't catch on...It's funny what washes up on the beach there....In fact one day, I was walking along and then I saw what appeared to be a couple of jellyfish, dried up and washed up on the shore. Living things don't really arrive on Plastic Beach so I was quite intrigued. I approached them to get a better look and then on closer inspection I realised they weren't jellyfish at all. They were actually silicon implants. A pair of silicon implants. Some discarded silicon implants had washed up on the shore. Now this is the moment when you're thinking about...y'know the beach, this place, the world...the very small leap in the evolutionary scale it would take for maybe silicon implant to morph, evolve into a living life form such as jellyfish...Or vice versa...Maybe life forms could even become silicon implants...or these bits of jettisoned body parts over years would mutate into life forms of their own, something totally new...There's enough of them in the sea now...it could happen. I mean though, the stuff that's floating around in there now is unbelievable, I mean, what kind of person chucks a pair of tits into the sea?

The track features hip-hop trio De La Soul, with the frontman of Super Furry Animals, Gruff Rhys.

Murdoc: When you think about Gorillaz, well it makes sense to have a Super Furry Animal on there, doesn't it? I've always loved them...

2D: That's minging, didn't want to know you were into that kind of stuff.

Murdoc: I'm into all sorts of...(clicks tongue) you know various, er...mmh...ugh...not that one though. I'm talking about featuring Gruff Rhys on the track, lots of fun with him. De La Soul too of course...you can't get bored with those guys in bear costumes.

2D: The track is fun too! If you turn it loud enough all the colours start spilling and washing out of your speakers.

Murdoc: You could actually flood your room with a song like this.

EMPIRE ANTS

Following the ad break, we smoothly transition into the next track of the record. A moment's peace amongst all the rush. Featuring a little sample from the Theme music to Tomorrow's World, this is the first track of a couple featuring Yukimi Nagano, Japan-born singer from Swedish band Little Dragon.

Murdoc: Ohhhhh…This one is probably my favourite song off this record. It was actually 2D who got me into Little Dragon. He played me this lovely song of theirs called 'Twice'. So I featured her twice on the record.

2D: I first heard that song while watching Grey's Anatomy. So strangely, even though it's like a delicate whisper of a tune, it reminds me of being in hospital.

Murdoc: I love it but it's nothing close to House MD you see, when it is about a Doctor and it's a series and it's American I'd rather stick with the one with the British actor.

The track opens up with a peaceful backdrop of acoustic guitars, broken keyboards, and a soft digital beat, eventually accompanied by 2D's charming vocals. Before we charge into a futuristic collage of synths, screechy electric violins, and robotic noises. The song completely morphs into something new with Yukimi taking the mic.

Murdoc: 'Empire Ants', as I imagine it, is like bathing in the moonlight floating in the bay of Plastic Beach, scratching the guitar and looking at the midnight sky, a darkness of black ink and velvet, dusted with dust and starlight. You see. Plus it's where she was when I wrote it. Half slice with gin and valium. Very calm. You can see the entire Universe from here. Very peaceful, you know? But, and you hear that in the song, the boat floats out into the bay, stalls on the shore, and upon arrival finds a fantastic club! All bass, neon and disco! With Yukimi from Little Dragon grooving on high! I don't see it as a problem, it's just a different texture.

GLITTER FREEZE

In this track, a storm has washed over Plastic Beach, led by Salford's own Mark E. Smith, and we are stuck in the middle of it.

Murdoc: This song is my version of Fantasia or maybe some mad old navel painting. It's kind of effective, don't you think?

2D: We did a few different versions of this actually. There's one when I'm humming all the way through. Which sounded good. I wonder why we didn't use that one.

Murdoc: Yeah, I wonder too. A track with you humming all the way through. Can't think of why we wouldn't have used that. I'm really glad we managed to get Mark E. Smith on the record. I'm not sure he felt the same, but y'know… He wanted to do his part facing north.

2D: So we were recording and he asked me which way was north from there but I didn't listen the first time.

Murdoc: Then the artist repeated the question to the moron, got recorded and the rest is history. We used it as a little intro, kind of what we did with Shaun Ryder on DARE. Sometimes the greatest moments are those little mistakes that you catch in the mix when you're just warming up.

Like 'Punk' on the debut album, and 'White Light' on 'Demon Days', this is the album's rawkus section of chaos.

Murdoc: Every album's got to have one.

SOME KIND OF NATURE

On this track, we have something that sounds like an educational scientific video from the 1980s. Except instead of protons and atoms. We have girls, gold, and stars.

Murdoc: I grew up on Lou Reed, and the Velvets. And I loved Lou's solo stuff, 'Magic And Loss' and 'The Blue Mask' and 'Transformer' of course.

2D: It's funny, I couldn't believe Murdoc when he showed me the demo. This song's got a good old sunshiny vibe, like something off Sesame Street, so I went for that sound when recording.

Murdoc: Apparently Lou Reed was one of the only people to never appear, or refuse to appear, on Sesame Street so it's quite a coup that we got him on this. In the booth, he wanted to do his whole vocal thing in private, on his own. He ordered everyone out of the studio. Myself included. I love Lou, but y'know: this is my album. I wanna know what's going down. Still, his track… Wow! Solid gold.

2D: The last line, "All we are is stars" that I sang…that's true, I've looked it up. In the history of time, as earth spun out the sun, basically formed out of a Solar Nebula, 'a disc shaped mass of dust and gas' that spun out of the sun, it means that we, and all life essentially… That's what we've all evolved from. From the atomic material from stars…nice thought. "All we are is stars".

Murdoc: Here's Bob Mortimer with the weather.

ON MELANCHOLY HILL

Heading into the double digits. We have 'On Melancholy Hill'. The third and final single of 'Plastic Beach'. Despite not getting much attention upon release, On Melancholy Hill would go onto become one of Gorillaz most well known songs, and the most popular song of the album. Following behind Clint Eastwood and Feel Good Inc. This was destined to be Gorillaz third all-time hit.

Murdoc: Ermm well....Melancholy Hill...That's a place on the island...The Melancholy Hill of Plastic Beach.... It's that feeling, that place, that you get in your soul sometimes, like....someone's let your tires down. A bit deflated. I usually get that around Tuesday morning. Clears up again maybe Thursday and I'm ready to start all over again...But it always seems quite real when I'm going through it...It's nice to break up the album with something a little lighter...I think it's also good to have something that's a genuine pop moment on every album...and this is one of those.

2D: This tune was one that Murdoc originally stole off Damon.

Murdoc: No no, didn't steal, borrowed.

2D: But earlier in the book you said-

Murdoc: AH BA BA BA BA!

2D:...but you said-

Murdoc whacks 2D across the mouth. Steam drifts off the burning hot slap mark that is present on 2D's cheek.

Murdoc: I actually found this song on the back seat of a bus – the 23 – After recording sessions with Mick and Paul, near Ladbroke Grove. It was an unloved orphan tune so I took it back to Plastic Beach and transformed it into this gorgeous glitterball of a track. I think it was on its way to a Good, The Bad and The Queen rehearsal, but me – being the Child Catcher – I took it with me inside. It was originally titled 'Primrose Hill'. I thought that was kind of dull, so I redid it.

BROKEN

This ominous and sad track tells of a tale of heartbreak and regret.

Murdoc: Erm… I don't really know what to say about this song, y'know, like Frank Zappa said "talking about music is like fishing about architecture". This track just worked. I don't want to talk about it. Is that ok?... Pass the rum, could you? Y'know sometimes it's possible to break stuff so it's unfixable. It's just Broken. There's no glue for a broken heart. Yes, some things get broken forever. But maybe they're not broken. Maybe the kaleidoscope shifts, and… er… it's a new day… It's perfectly possible to restart the game… If… I'm rambling here… but… oi for the love of the god, just skip to the next one… I hate track by tracks.

SWEEPSTAKES

The longest track on the album, a brass-y and hip-hop-ish tune designed to be distinguished from the rest since the beginning.

2D: This track was a pain, do you remember?

Murdoc: Oh, mate! My bad, can't say otherwise. The original recording was 12 minutes long but when we put it through Cyborg Noodle's logic-music-processor-thingy she couldn't handle it, so we had to cut it.

2D: Right in half, that way we could reprise it on a continuation of Plastic Beach…

Murdoc: That'll never come out. Anyway, the Hypnotic Brass brothers gave us that full-on Chicago brass muscle turning this track into a Quincy Jones version of hip-hop, MC'ed superlatively by Mos Def. An absolute gent.

2D: "Sweepstakes: You're a winner. Collect your little plastic prize at the counter!"

Murdoc: There is a lot of rubbish that gets dangled in front of people on this earth. Making people feel like a winner is one of the best ways of hooking them in, and I thought to show this message, we would need a little NYC perspective.

PLASTIC BEACH

If 'Welcome To The World Of The Plastic Beach' casted Snoop Dogg to introduce the audience to this mysterious island of junk, then the main song inspired by this faux landmass needed a collaboration that met such high expectations. It's a special moment for fans of Gorillaz and The Clash alike.

Murdoc: Well, I had commandeered Paul Simonon from The Good, The Bad And The Queen. And it made sense.

2D: Gorillaz were always influenced by The Clash. I loved how they took the heart and soul of punk and reggae smeared it in London graffiti and paint and then sailed it round the world. I don't think that's a million miles from what Gorillaz do now.

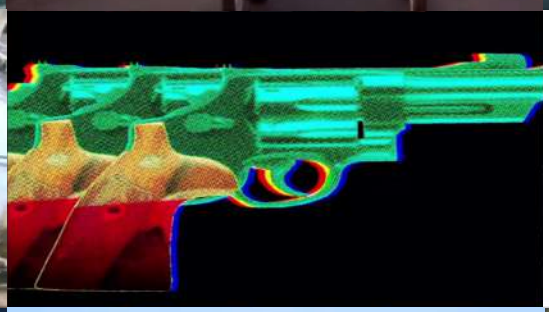
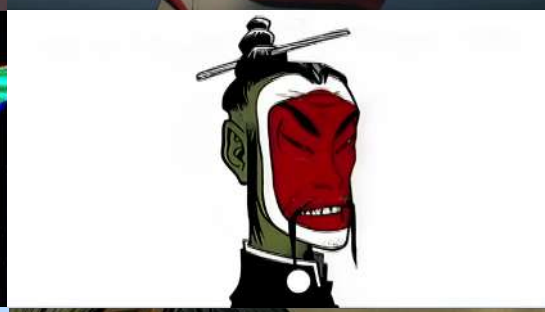
Murdoc: It was my brother Hannibal who got me into the Clash. It was him who broke my nose too, so I've got a lot to thank him for really. But being influenced by them one thing.... Getting them back together, well Paul and Mick Jones, to work with us is just something else...Now the way I was thinking is, I'm in the middle of the ocean and what I'm really missing in this subtropical garbarged state is a bit of 'West London'. As much as I wanted this record to include elements from around the world, I need this boat, this cruise ship to have a west London anchor. So I got a couple of anchors out, The Clash.

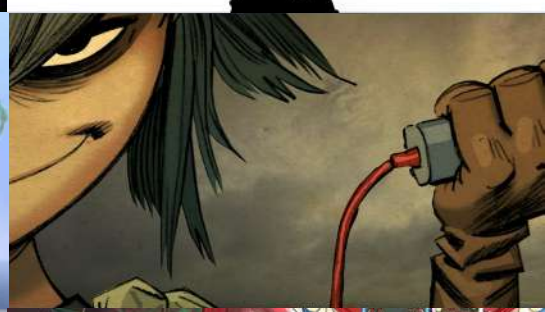
2D: The bass on this track. Very heavy, you know? Paul Simonon's bass is way better, way heavier, than the original now. I'm glad we recorded it with a proper bass on there. Instead of that codham fisted clumping you do.

Murdoc thwacks 2D once more, the force so powerful it sends the singer flying out of his chair and onto the floor..

Murdoc: I'll tell you what happened on this track, and take it how you will.. Basically we started off like the Owl and The Pussycat sailing round in a little wooden boat...but the dream turned bad and the idyllic island…the island started filling up...I knew this would happen...It's inevitable... But all these keyboards and synths and effects boxes started washing up on this shore...You ever wondered what happens to funk bands when they split up...? Where the 80's went...? What happens to all those synth basses...those cheap keyboards and all that mass-produced claptrap? Once the bands and the record labels and the industries collapse...they get chucked into the sea...It all gets dumped...but then...bit by bit they started washing up on this beach...so I did what any musician would do...I just kind of dried them out, plugged them in and then mixed them up.... made a brand new track, out of the plastic synths that washed up on the shore...with a couple of guys out The Clash...I mean, what would you do...?

SUPER
FAST
Jelly
FISH



TIC BEACH STRIPSTRIPS

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一人ぼっちになって、僕のハートは潰せ続ける
また迷い込んで、逃れられない
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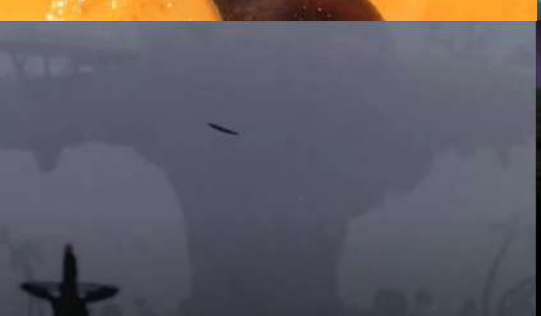


TO BINGE

Heading into the first part of the three part encore of the album, To Binge' ends up as a beautiful Hawaiian duet between Yukimi Nagano and 2D.

Murdoc: The second collaboration with Yukimi, A Hawaiian version of melancholy, yeah? You don't see a lot of miserable Hawaiians often, do you?

2D: Hawaii isn't really known for its grim outlook on life.

CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

Serving as a mirror to the opener, this is Bobby Womack's final reflection on the concept of Plastic Beach as a whole.

Murdoc: Mr. Womack's performance on this song can still bring tears to my eyes. That mixture of hope and uncertainty in his voice – the age and the experience, the fear and the joy…This song, like the Who's 'Love Reign O'er Me' is the moment that gathers together the events of the album, the events of the world...and pauses for reflection. D'you know? It's a realisation that life on this beautiful planet is as fragile as the gossamer of a butterfly's wings....

2D: That isn't quite right. Gossamer's is the fibrous material made from spider silk... so that doesn't work.

Murdoc: But on this exit track, woven into the melancholic blanket are threads of golden hope....The future stretches out before us, a vast plain of pristine unbroken snow, an immaculate, untrodden landscape offering immeasurable potential and adventures unwritten. Inevitably though that landscape always gets pebble-dashed once again with wonky boob jobs, close-ups of nostrils, talent shows, weight loss / gain issues, indignant politicians, adverts for insurance and more of all the rubbish we trail in our wake. I've chosen to avoid describing the physical aspects of the landscape of Plastic Beach. The Wells of Bitter Tears, the Igloos of Madness, the Foothills of My Mind, the Whale of Disbelief...The Jizzy Castle. But I thought, lyrically, it was necessary to include a little bit about The Cloud of Unknowing, as this great big black cumulonimbus has long been a feature of my environment. Sometimes you just can't shift something as ominous as doubt...Still it does offer some hope.

2D: "Waiting to see what the morning brings, it may bring sunshine on its wings…"

Murdoc: Or maybe it'll bring an oily seagull dropping its mess on another day. Funnily enough, we went to some lengths to get the seagull sounds that open this track. We had to use a gull-wrangler and a special microphone to get exactly the right sound.

PIRATE JET

The final song takes the album out swinging, a finale with shuddering jazz hands.

Murdoc: Here come the bulldozers, the big plastic bulldozers of hope...The Pirate jets...Maybe they're coming in to level the land..."The people, the plastic eating people". Well you've got to end on a punchline haven't you....it's just a little drum roll, to punctuate the joke of life...Laugh and the world laughs with you, eh? EH? Cry and you're on your own. It's possible that what this one's saying is: the job's a good'un'. We're finished and now everyone's evolved into plastic.

2D: Plastic Beach is now full up with Plastic People. A new breed of human, perfect for the synthetic future that mankind created.

Murdoc: Or maybe it's saying: "It's kicking out time at the last chance saloon. And this is the last record we're playing tonight...Pirate Jet". D'you understand me? It's a kind of 'Always Look On The Bright Side of Life' tip. "It's all good now, because we left the taps running for 100 hundred years...". I was thinking of ending on a cover of Hersham Boys by Sham 69 but it didn't seem right somehow...

2D: Imagine looking down a telescope at the end of the pier. Way off in the distance is a little island, green and pristine. From back here it looks like home-

Murdoc: -It's very possible it might end up exactly as we have. Just a hard ball of plastic floating in the middle of nowhere. Full of desire, clutter, oil-slicks and paperwork. But...at the moment it's empty, it's clean and it's naive, but it is filling up. Plastic Beach...it's another place, it's another way of looking at the world. And this is its soundtrack....Not even King Canute can turn back a tide like that. The Island's just filling up, cd's, books, tyres, rubble, boxes, folders...everything's just spilling forth. A tidal wave of our detritus... We're fit to burst. Or just.... Evolving into plastic…

After 17 months and 66 tracks recorded, the album was given the 16 track cut we now know as a classic.

December 2009, Plastic Beach mastered by Howie Wienberg at Masterdisk, New York

Murdoc: I'm up for another 50 if you are mate.

STYLO

Stylo: Terror on the Murder Mile

Murdoc: Like I said before, it was difficult to get some of these collaborators on the album. The hardest being Bobby Womack, he hadn't worked on anything for just about a decade. Now we had some of his vocals already, courtesy of Damon's lovely demo collection…but it wasn't enough. During the middle of the recording sessions, 2D, Cyborg and I went on a little expedition to California to seek out our final and most glorious collaboration…

Murdoc's plan was simple: break into Bobby's estate, Steal his 1969 'Stylo' Chevrolet Camaro, 'encourage' him to come along with them, and take off before anyone noticed.

Murdoc: It was a botched kidnapping job. Cyborg started spazzing out and blew our cover, to stop him from calling for help I had to persuade him with my little friend 'Sally'.

Murdoc points his revolver to the back of Bobby's skull and begins walking him to the boot of his 'Stylo' Camaro.

Murdoc: He was surprisingly talkative, and he and 2D clicked immediately. I don't think he took much liking to me though, guns tend to set a bad first impression I've found.

Bobby and 2D discussed his contributions to the 1972 Drama/Action film 'Across 110th Street' as Murdoc was shoving him into the boot of the car.

2D: Were you surprised when 110th was bleak? Did it seem like an ordinary day or-?

Bobby: Nah, you know what, they said 'tell you what, we're gonna let you do this movie and you got 14 days to complete it' and they only let me see the footage one time.

2D: You saw the film once?

Bobby: Yeah I'd only seen the film once but I said 'shit I could write about the ghetto all night long.' I came back with the songs and they were shocked 'how did you finish that?' Man, I stayed up all night, never went to sleep, just writing.

Murdoc slams the car boot shut.

Murdoc: That's the kind of attitude we need more of around here.

And so, Jamie Hewlett and his Passion Pictures film crew was called upon to send out drones to capture the footage of 2D, Murdoc, and Cyborg's escapades in the desert of California.

Murdoc: Stylo is this really cool Camaro, classic model but with a few custom mods. Supersized ashtrays, faux snakeskin seat liners, and the ability to turn into a shark. Yes Mr. Womack I will be taking this, thanks for offering. Speak of the devil…

ABOVE
"This CCTV footage is looking oddly crusty"
2D

To announce the arrival of the new album and the release of the first single, 'Stylo', a promotional video was constructed. But this would be no ordinary promo. Whilst driving through the deserts of America after successfully kidnapping their newest musical asset, Bobby Womack, the group were attacked, dramatically shot at by a mystery bounty hunter… who looked strangely familiar. This footage of the assault, captured by Murdoc's personal documentary crew, was subsequently used to accompany the 'Stylo' Single.

Murdoc: We had to leave in a rush after sealing Bobby in the back, must've tripped some sort of security thingy. The cops were going to be on their way any moment. We left with seconds to spare.

The band was now going 120 miles per hour down the empty desert of Calico, a ghost town in San Bernardino County. Unexpectedly off screen, Dog The Bounty Hunter pursued the band for reasons currently left unknown. Nonetheless, he shot a bullet through Cyborg Noodle's head, and banged up the Stylo car a bit. The footage was recorded however has since been ditched due to controversial claims involving Dog. After a hefty chase, Cyborg shot out Dog's left tire, leading him to lose control over his SUV and drift off into the opposite direction.

Murdoc: Come to think of it, I'm surprised he could see anything considering the size of his wife's bosom.

Here is where the music video properly begins, the band is speeding down the road, smoke pouring from the front of the vehicle's engine. On the left side of the road, a rather large Police officer is eating a donut and drinking coffee. On the cop's radio, Mos Def can be heard rapping his infamous lines from the track. As the Stylo speeds past the Officer, he quickly panics after recognising the infamous grill plate, he slides across the hood of the car and begins to chase after them. We now see a front view of each of the band member's, a pissed off and stressed Murdoc, a hungover miserable 2D, and a tense Cyborg Noodle.

2D: I remember I was using this kind of clown mask to hide my hangover from drinking after the previous night. It didn't really work.

As the car continues, 2D begins to sing, in attempts to serenade himself to relaxation. a Dodge Coronet police car pulls up behind the band, trying to get them to pull over. Immediately, Cyborg Noodle springs to her feet, pulls out her gun and shoots at the cop, with Murdoc trying to pull her back in the car.

Murdoc: I think she was easily startled by the cop, since Dog shot her through the head you can't really blame her. In her defence though the bullet in the noggin might have done some damage to her decision making protocols. Has a lot to answer for, that hole in the head. She was much less chatty after that. Not to mention the sporadic bouts of ultra-violence. But, y'know, we've all got our foibles.

After a few shots are fired, the car swerves off the side of the road, and crashes through a billboard promoting 'Superfast Jellyfish'. 2D continues to sing, but is now a bit on edge after witnessing the cop crash.

2D: 'A bit on edge' is a bit of an understatement, I needed some new pants after that one cos that car crash was fuckin loud, phew.

A red 1968 Chevrolet El Camino is parked on the right side of the road, as the Stylo car speeds by, the Camino chases in pursuit. As the sky turns black with a spectral fog, Cyborg Noodle begins to have a total breakdown. Oil begins to leak from her bullet hole, eye sockets, and nose. She collapses in the backseat, shutting down. 2D and Murdoc now at a loss with their only defence gone. As the El Camino is trying to catch up, the driver of the car is revealed to be none other than actor Bruce Willis.

2D: Is this a dream you had, Murdoc?

Murdoc: No, you fool! You were there too, don't you remember?

With the Camino finally tailgating Stylo, 2D screams 'IT'S BRUCE' to Murdoc, Murdoc does a double take, before the Camino finally pulls up next to them, Bruce pulls out a revolver, Murdoc panicking pulls up the window in attempts to defend himself. Before Bruce begins to open fire on the two.

2D: I always thought you two got on.

Murdoc: Yeah, me too. Maybe he's just got a grump on, you know, cause I stiffed him with that sarky bill at Nobo that one time. But you know, boy, that's a bit dramatic to hunt me down and try and kill me.

With all the windows shattered and the car covered in more bullet holes. Murdoc and 2D began to completely lose it, with Murdoc trying to hold back all of his internal organs from falling out of his arse, and 2D cowering in fear at the thought of being shot and killed, Bruce sticks his head out the window, shoots the cars rear view mirror and maniacally laughs. Murdoc, having had enough of this game of cat and mouse, activates the Stylo turbo booster.

ABOVE
Inside of the Sharksub
"It's lucky I didn't need the toilet"
2D

Murdoc: It's a miracle that there were no other cars out on that road, otherwise we'd probably crash and…well, die a horrible death.

2D rubs his eyes and sinks into his seat, clearly uncomfortable with reliving this traumatic memory.

ABOVE
Stylo shooting day
"Funny, I don't recall any of this"
MURDOC NICCALS

Meanwhile, a few miles back, we see the police officer that crashed through the billboard, bleeding and struggling, in front of him is a huge gate with a sign titled 'Sweepstakes', a few crows perched around the sign, a distinct foreshadow for the cops ultimate fate. In a fast paced manner we cut back and forth between Bruce trying to catch up with the band, and the cop crawling for his donuts, as he crawls the best he possibly can, a demon entity spawns from black smoke behind him, it's none other than The Boogieman himself, he slowly approaches the cop before covering him in his long black cloak, the black smoke ascend from the ground covering the two, before they are both gone. Another soul harvested.

Murdoc: We've got the Boogieman trying to track me down on film now. Enough to send a chill right down your spine. Schweinhund! I never even saw him until I got the footage back to Plastic Beach. It frightened the life out of me. Turns out I did know of this creature after all, met him back in 2004, strange how I didn't quite remember who he was when Mos first brought him up.

We cut back to Bruce, who is ramming into the back of the car, before finally, the Stylo car swerves, 2D and Murdoc scream as they crash through a fence. Bruce pulls up his Camino,, loading his gun ready to finish the job. Standing upon the broken fence, Bruce looks out and smiles as he sees nothing but ocean. He believes the job has been done and that the trio are dead…but this is not the case, as we head into the ocean the Stylo car slowly sinks down into the abyss before turning into a submarine and sailing off.

Murdoc: Huh, I knew that feature would come in handy.

And with that the first music video for Plastic Beach was recorded. Over and done with before the album itself was even finished recording.

Murdoc: My therapist said something redundant like 'the best way to deal with it was to confront it head on' So I, er…cobbled together all the footage, the car chase, The Boogieman, the fat cop, the maniac bounty-hunter and everything and used it to promote our 'Stylo' single. We didn't release the video until early next year, Jamie spent that remaining time storyboarding the events out for Passion Pictures to follow when syncing the footage to the music, but I am grateful that we got that all on film. I'd consider it my best work to date, despite the fact that it cost us something like, pff…30% of the albums initial budget? I wasn't bothered though, Jamie was pulling huge clumps of hair out afterwards so I heard. We had all sorts set up in case of an emergency; ambulances, fire trucks, helicopters, roadblocks…really makes you wonder why none of them actually helped to stop the bastards trying to kill us! Still, great video, Grammy worthy.

2D: I'm grateful that I made it out of that experience without a bullet in my head.

Murdoc: Yes, yes that too.

If Bobby was trapped in the back of the Stylo car, did he make it out ok? Did he know what was going on?

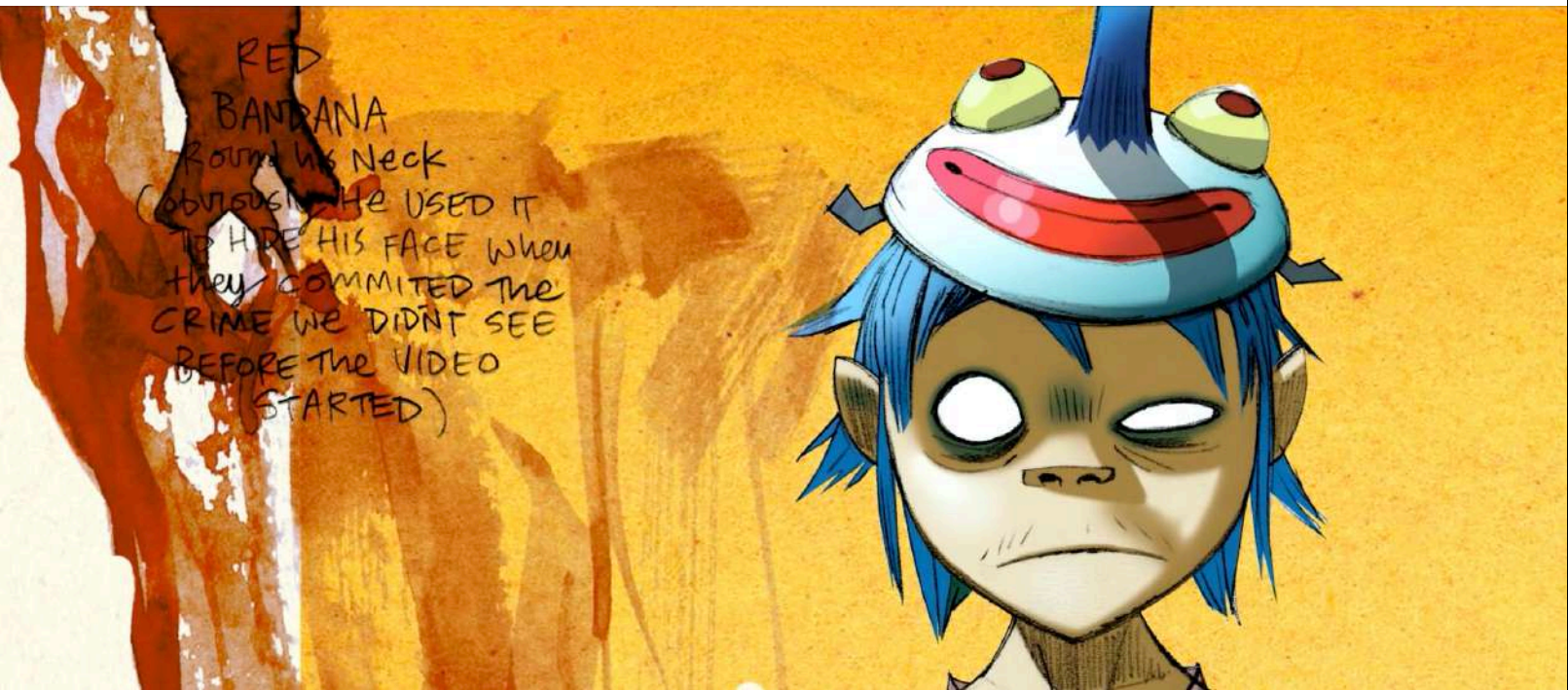
Murdoc: Oh yes, of course he did. When the car transformed into a submarine he was just transported into the very back, the meat locker, so he was all fine there, ate a couple of bananas he did. I'm really surprised he was willing to work with us after that whole experience, well not really considering...y'know….gun to the head and whatnot…but eventually I made us set course for Plastic Beach, our America trip was over and it was time to head back home.

2D: Great.

Murdoc: I decided to change my clothes, since I had properly soiled myself after nearly being shot. I put 2D in charge of watching Cyborg Noodle, who was still deactivated, and got into this really nice sailor get up, also let Bobby in on what had happened. Also as a…backup precaution, I sent an SOS message to all the collaborators that we had recorded with at that point, and told them all to get into their submarines and head towards my location. Just to have some defence in case any…water cops...or…Bruce Willis's decided to come and kill us again

Did you ever find out why Bruce was trying to kill you in the first place?

Murdoc: Apparently so yeah, he was hired to come and kill us. I don't know who hired him though. Could've been Malthus and the Black Clouds, Boogiemen, Pirate Jets, James Blunts… seems as though he does it as a side gig in between his films. Interesting stuff, I must get a copy of his autobiography if he ever does one.



STYLO

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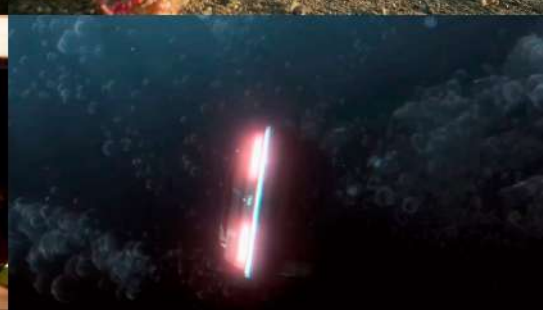
SWEEPSTAKES



On Melancholy Hill: Beyond the Sea

While the barely alive Gorillaz trio were hiding out under the ocean. Across the sea on a ship named the M. Harriet, a long lost Gorillaz member, would be devising a plan of her own. None other than Gorillaz, very own Noodle, alive and well, was spotted wearing a peculiar cat mask, possibly to hide their identity. The music video begins as we see Noodle shooting at the two pirate jet planes in slow motion. Noodle directly hits one of the pilots causing them to crash into the icy depths of the ocean floor, before the remaining plane drops a bomb on the deck of the M. Harriet. Forcing Noodle to evacuate on a yellow dinghy with only an acoustic guitar and a bag of supplies, losing her fight with the pirate jets. With a strong whiff of the surreal, we witness Murdoc, 2D and Cyborg Noodle where we left them at the end of 'Stylo', travelling towards an unknown destination in their shark submarine. Cyborg recovers from the Stylo shootout and coughs up an octopus, while 2D remains terrified from the events of the previous Stylo attack, and the situation now unfolding…

2D: I only really joined the band to make music. And now, I'm being held captive by a bastard bass player, in an underwater submarine, being attacked by sodding pirates, who are trying to take over this rotten piece of broken plastic in the ocean, that Gorillaz call home. All this, just to make a video. It's making me want to DIE!

Along the way, Gorillaz sub is joined by a host of other submarines in all shapes and sizes - all travelling to the same destination. We see that some of the submarine pilots are our friends from the album: Lou Reed, Gruff Rhys, Snoop Dogg, Paul Simonon, Mick Jones and De La Soul all feature driving their subs along to rally around Murdoc.

Murdoc: Oh yeah. De La Soul was juicing some of those sodding Superfast Jellyfish. Y'know, for the fastest food known to man they seemed to have a bit of trouble outspeeding Trugoy's jet turbine.

Murdoc spies a small outcrop in the ocean with a manatee sunbathing on top and steers the sub to investigate.

Murdoc: I'm not sure exactly what I'd taken that day but the visuals were really strong. There was obviously going to be a big showdown, y'know? You could tell.

Meanwhile, back out in the Atlantic Ocean, Noodle is awoken by something below the surface of the sea. She checks underneath her and out springs Russel! A great big chubby round Russel! Roughly 500 feet in size! Following jumping into the ocean, Russel let his body drift off at sea, just slowly being carried across the deep, it wasn't long before Russel began consuming radioactive contaminated shrimp. The cocktail contamination of oil spills, shrimp and pollution caused Russel's body mass to greatly increase. All this led Russel to right here with Noodle.

Back at the plateau, all the subs start to converge on the manatee's outcrop and begin to surface…but the sunbathing manatee is not what it seemed. The poor creature is wrapped up in barbed wire, washed up at the end of its life. Paradise is truly breaking down. Murdoc pulls out a telescope to get a better look at the manatee before noticing some sort of shadowy outline giving the gigantic sea cow a massage… it's none other than the hideous image of The Boogieman! Preparing to harvest the soul of the manatee. Murdoc orders Cyborg to take him down before he dives into the water below. However, as the fog clears, Plastic Beach is revealed in all its festering glory.

Murdoc: Ah… my pink paradise. It's been a long time for all of us hasn't it, yeah? But now… I'M BACK!

Like Stylo, the footage that Jamie Hewlett and his drones recorded would later be released as the music video for the band's follow up single 'On Melancholy Hill'.

Murdoc: This one took a lot longer to produce than Stylo… and also went over budget…we used the same method of having Jamie sketching out the footage in sync to the music for it to be edited back in London by Passion Pictures.

There's a story running through the Gorillaz videos and for 'On Melancholy Hill' the team at Passion Pictures was given a strong board from the bands illustrator Jamie Hewlett, with refinements from co-director Pete Candeland. The storyboard highlighted key story points in the characters journey, alongside the music. The concept drawings provided references for the composition, drama and mood throughout the promo. Jason Nicholas, Wes Coman and Harry Bardak guide us through the making of the promo. Head of CG, Jason Nicholas, begins…

Jason: The animation process began with a fantastically drawn storyboard by Jamie Hewlett, illustrating the actions that needed to take place and the key points in the story. Co-director Pete Candeland then discussed the board with Jamie, and they worked on changes to timings and introduced new ideas. We then began the animatic, blocking out action from the storyboard using simple forms. Rob Valley produced a style guide of reference drawings of the band members and the various musicians Gorillaz collaborated with - such as Snoop Dogg and Lou Reed - who appear in the video in submarines.

Jason: This video involved a range of media, including 2D and CG elements, and our job was to make sure that these elements sat well together; that the 2D characters and the 3D elements felt a part of the CG world. We didn't want them to look stuck on. A lot of the 2D characters have quite complex tones on them to help integrate them with the shots. We also used some live action effects, such as drips of water. As with all out multimedia productions, it was important to make sure there was a good flow of communication between the 2D and CG animators, as 2D becomes very expensive to redo if you get it wrong!

Murdoc: I have no clue what this blokes on but I want a taste. I sometimes think they just make up technical words on the spot to make it seem like their job as editor is harder than it actually is. You cut it to the beat Jason!

Jason: One of my favourite scenes in this promo has to be when the octopus emerges from Cyborg Noodle's mouth - it's just a creatively cool idea.

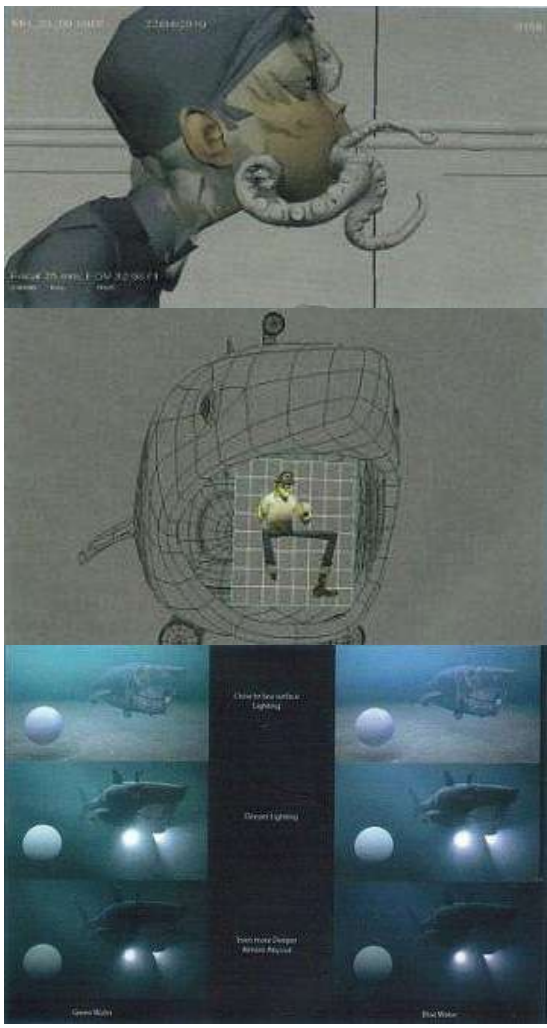
Murdoc: 'Creatively cool idea'? See, this is exactly what I meant. He's just speaking out his arse.

Jason: One thing I have learnt over my time working with Jamie and Pete is that their creative ideas always challenge the viewer's expectations - and mine, come to that. An example of this is the dramatic change in scale of Russel in this video, whereas before he was always the same size as the other members of the band.

Murdoc: Eh? Wot you just say?

Over to Wes Coman…

Murdoc: No, hang on. Rewind a bit!



ABOVE
CG Animation production
"I can't make heads or tails of these weird geek markings!"
MURDOC NICCALS

Wes: As CG animation supervisor I take an overall view of the job and help things run smoothly - suggesting rigging options, and talking with the FC and rendering guys to make it as easy as possible for our animation to work in their scenes. Softimage XSI is our main 3D package. I started with layouts, recreating the 2D storyboard in 2D with basic scene elements and cameras. QuickTime previews were sent to co-director Pete Candeland, who used Cinesync to annotate them. We started working on Jamie and Pete's comments, finessing the layout, and began animating for real as the models were rigged. The animation was exported to the rendering scenes. Although the video is set in a somewhat cartoony world, we tried to keep a sense of realism.

Murdoc: Mate, have you never been near the ocean? Blackpool? Brighton? Whitby? No ones buying this tosh of 'the whole video being animated' even animation a decade down the line won't look that good.

Wes: We added little wobbles and jiggles to planes at the start of the video, and for the submarines we took some time to get the right feel and sense of weight as they move through the waters. Pete wanted a simple, graphic look to the subs, so you tend to see them side-on or head-on, and they move cleanly with no loop-the-loops.

Murdoc: This has gone from silly to downright brainless. You added a bit of shake to the footage! Give it a rest. I could've done that myself, the hell am I paying you for?

Wes: The subs were animated along spline curves with extra controllers for local motion.

Murdoc: Right. I'm done. Bollocks to thi- (SLAM)

Murdoc storms out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

2D: Uh…I thought it was interesting, I didn't realise how much focus was actually on me. Can you keep going?

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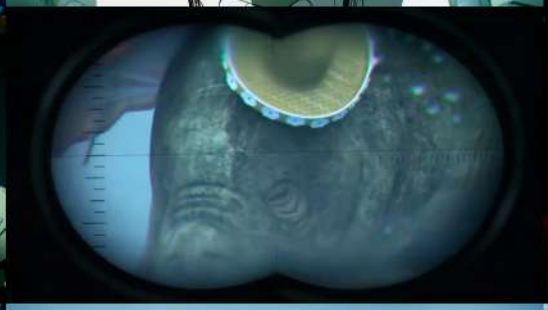


Wes: The CG character Cyborg Noodle is the same rig that was used in the 'Stylo' video - it's a straightforward human biped rig with the usual controllers. For the drawn 2D animation, it depended on the scene; if there was a camera move or we saw the characters interacting with the 3D set, we applied the 2D image sequence to a simple poly plane and positioned it in the 3D scene. A UV pass of this poly was rendered out and was used to position the 2D animation sequence in Nuke.

Harry Bardak on developing the look

Harry: We used Softimage XSI with Mental Ray for the rendering, and Nuke for the compositing. We started to light scenes before we had all the textures and shading ready, so the directors could see if we were going in the right direction. The last step was adding detail where it needed to be. We call this iterative process 'look-dev' - you basically develop the look. Two different tasks are involved: one is artistic - you define what materials and texture you need. What type of jackets does Cyborg Noodle wear? Leather. Okay, we'll set the parameter of the shader to make it behave like a leather jacket.

2D: Yeah, I can see why that's an important observation to make (pause) yeah. I think I could be a look-dev.

Harry: The second task in the look-dev process is more technical - we used a calibrated scene to develop all our assets. The colours and the intensities were calibrated according to a Macbeth ColorChecker chart, like a director of photography will do on a live set. That ensured consistent assets, whatever the lighting situation.

2D: Hmm! Melancholy hill, featuring, uh, Macbeth on Colour checking. Heh. It's got a nice ring to it.

Harry: We used all the effects available: raytracing, glossy reflection, global illumination, subsurface scattering, displacement, volumetric effects and 2D motion blur. This could have slowed things down, but we used an efficient shader system that only calculates the light for areas that are visually important.

2D: Flipping ell' are you still talking about our video? Sounds like you're setting up a new rig for when the new Resident evil makes it onto PC. That's gonna be wicked. Actually, can I borrow your computers when it does?

Harry: The sea surface was generated using real sky and sunlight, with a colour grade. For the scene inside the sub, we created the environmental lighting and then baked the result into an environment map to create a 360 HDR image version of the submarine interior, and used this to light the 3D character Cyborg Noodle. The underwater sequence was a bit tricker because it involved a lot of volumetric light. We had to render the subs separately, and the look was achieved in Nuke. 2D elements were present as grids in our 3D scenes, so we didn't render Toonz imagery in 2D. The compositors remapped that using the grids within Nuke. Within the 12-week schedule we did a great job. There was room for improvement, especially in the water simulation, but it was a great project to work on, with a great team at Passion Pictures. It ran very smoothly.

2D: This sounds amazing, when can I see it?

A Pirate's Broadcast

ABOVE
Pirate Radio cover
"That never got a CD"
MURDOC NICCALS

Lost, booze-addled and set adrift in a madness of his own making, Murdoc assembled his own pirate radio broadcast centre from the rain-lashed lighthouse on Plastic Beach.

Murdoc: I mean, if you're going to be stuck in the middle of the ocean, surrounded by rum, you may as well have a pirate radio station, don't you think? My cutlass is drawn and the gangplank is lowered, so I'll be stealing someone's airwaves any day now.

January 21st 2010 *Episode 1 of Murdoc's Pirate Radio is broadcast*

Murdoc hosted his first session hijacking the airways of the music paper NME's radio station, spinning discs from the middle of his ocean HQ.

Murdoc: Murdoc's got his own show! Murdoc's got his own show, La-La-La-La, Hoy, La-La-La-I must have some rum… Ow! Y'know, my little- my little tinkle has just completely vanished, y'know? It's like a little baby carrot. Anyway, I shouldn't really have told you that, that's too much informa- I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

It was here among the tunes of terror that Murdoc also debuted select cuts and tunes from the forthcoming Plastic Beach album, the very first airing of new Gorillaz material in almost 5 years. The only form of assistance Murdoc received for these shows was from a longtime Gorillaz collaborator and friend, Cass Browne.

Murdoc: Cass Browne was like my personal producer yeah? From my XFM takeovers to my facebook live streams, he was the one pulling the strings from start to finish. Setting up the equipment, drafting me scripts, pouring me drinks. When I first met him I couldn't stand the prat, gave him a good walloping right in the face cheeks, figured that'd put him in his place. I must've knocked something good because he didn't leave my side after that. Every broadcast I had lined up he'd stop whatever he was doing and get a tugboat over to my lighthouse, almost like my own little studio monkey, a personal Pilkington. I couldn't do it without him, I was drinking so much I forgot my own brother Hannibal at one point, so he was sort of like a stand-in for my brain, as well as my drummer.

Despite his impeccable track selection and the astounding new songs, Murdoc sounded unhinged, alone and isolated on this Plastic Beach island. Had the man lost his mind? Or did he just really need a couple of early nights.

Murdoc: It's getting a bit grim around here actually. I'm in the middle of the ocean with this fog swirling around, and there's noises, and things in the night- which I just don't understand, from creatures of the deep. And it's, just, frankly disturbing. Although, having said that, that could be my self-conscience. So there you are. Um, I think the other day, y'know, I-I may have, I'm not sure cos it was so foggy- I might have lost a limb. I'm not actually sure.

Along with airing on NME Radio, The episodes would also air on Yahoo Radio, and the Gorillaz website..

February 3rd 2010 *Episode 2 of Murdoc's Pirate Radio is broadcast*

Murdoc: I'm actually treating you very nicely. Even though I'm probably…my mental disintegration. Uh, it- it is mildly entertaining I suppose, y'know. That's why I set the radio station up- I wanted you to hear me sort of, y'know, mentally disintegrate on air. So there's a record of it. I think it's only fair, isn't it? I think it's only fair! Y'know, if you're gonna disintegrate mentally, get it down on tape! That's what I say- that's what the doctor said to me, y'know?

February 15th 2010 *Episode 3 of Murdoc's Pirate Radio is broadcast*

Murdoc: What's the matter with ya Murdoc? Oh, Murdy, Murdy, Murdy. Youknowwhenyouspendalotoftimeonyourownandyougoabitmad? OH, where's the Doctor? OOH, Give Me More-Drug! Give Me Drug! Oh, that's right I'm on me own. Oh dear, oh dear. I need help.

February 22nd 2010 *Episode 4 of Murdoc's Pirate Radio is broadcast*

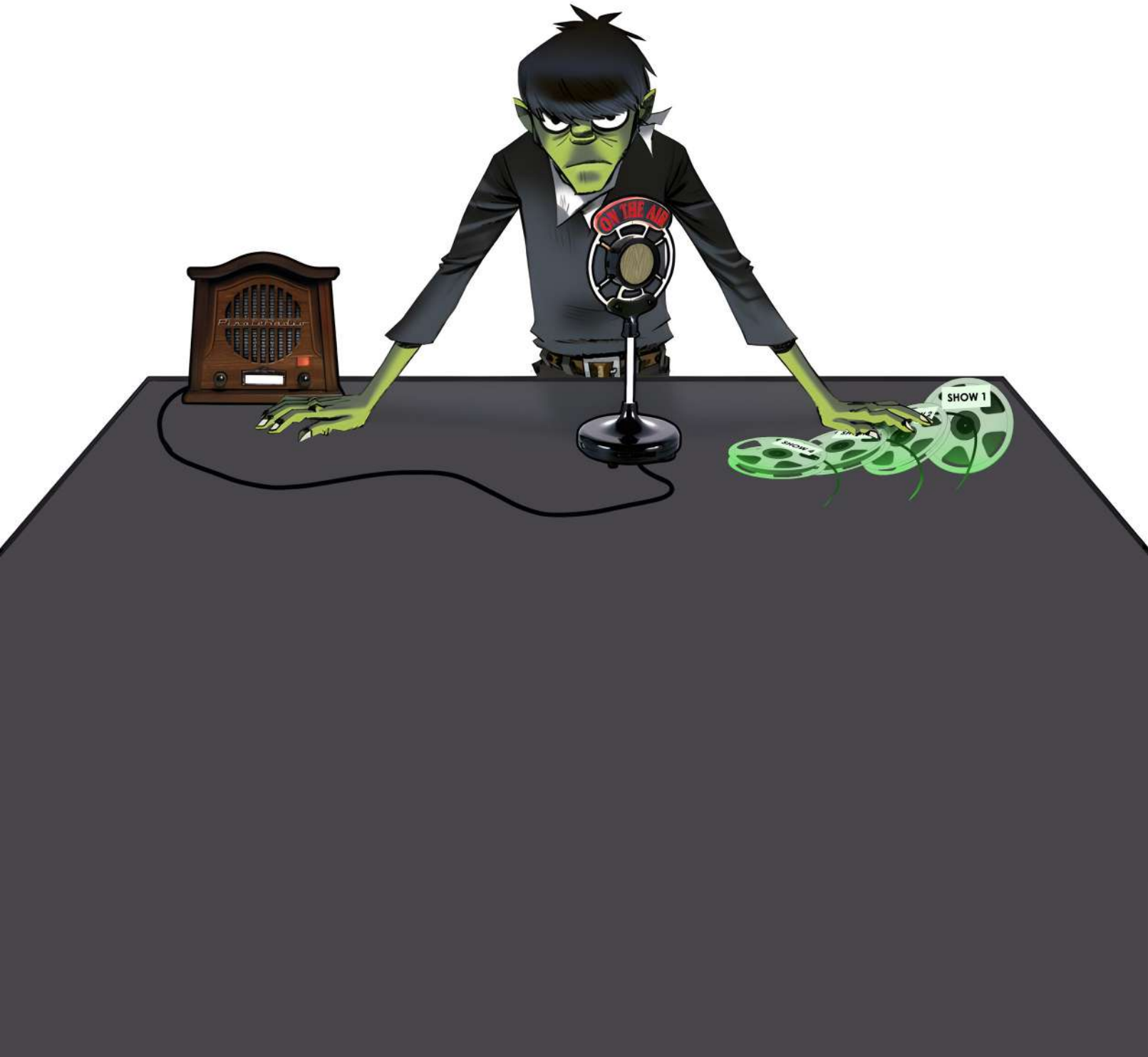
In the final episode of the initial run, Murdoc brought on a very special guest for the show, Gorillaz very own 2D.

2D: I hated being locked in a glass dome with that psycho, I bet if I said the wrong thing, he would've killed me there and then. Well it's happened before, him losing it...but since Noodle and Russel wouldn't be around to sort him out, I figured I wouldn't be making it out alive if I set him off.

Murdoc: Temper temper young Tosspot. I had to do a lot in my power to stop myself from damaging you too much….

Murdoc turns with a sly grin on his face.

Murdoc: Have I gone into detail yet about the magical wonders of chloroform? It's amazing isn't it? It's easy, quick. You get whatever you want from it. You want to ditch community service? Chloroform. You want to get out of dinner with your Dad? Chloroform. You want artists on your album? Chloroform. Really mate, it fixes anything it touches.


ON THE AIR
SHOW 1

The Grand Opening of Plastic Beach

After a whole year of rumours spreading throughout the internet regarding the third Gorillaz campaign, fans were finally let in on what Murdoc had in store for this outing.

January 20th 2010 *Plastic Beach is announced to the public*

In the preceding month, images of the band had been released via the UK Edition of Wire Magazine. Fans were scratching their heads as to what was happening with the band.

Murdoc: Quick tidbit, for the press photos of that magazine I actually built these mannequins of 2D and Russel. Russel was gone, and 2D was…er…too busy to help with press shoots that week, so I had to improvise. These dummies were so realistic, they kinda just looked like lifeless dead corpses of 2D and Russel that I was playing dress up with. It's creepy, I know, but hey, had to send something down the wire didn't I? Just wanted to let you know about that…so that's your cue to keep going.

In the following weeks leading up to the album's release, various idents of the island were released online. These idents would be the only pieces of media that would contain the various unreleased Plastic Beach tracks.

Murdoc: Well I had these songs just lying around, so I figured I might as well use them for something y'know. I mean, this was probably a fault on my end. Had I never released these idents then these kids wouldn't be bugging me about this unreleased tosh, settle down GU, you aren't bossing me about just because you got an endorsement in the last book! You know how often I get harassed about this kind of stuff?

Along with the announcement of the album, the Gorillaz website was renovated to match the Plastic Beach theme. Once entering Gorillaz.com, fans would be greeted with a countdown alongside a map of places where the album had been recorded, updated to reveal more locations as the release date grew nearer.

Murdoc: I figured we should come back with a bang. Our website was always a huge treat for the fans. Being able to go online and see where we live, record, and hang. We received hundreds…no, thousands…NO…MILLIONS of visitors daily! We even won a Webby Award! Just because Kong was burnt to the ground, I wasn't going to let that stop me from getting that next Webby.
(Editor's Note: Gorillaz were not nominated for a Webby at any point during Plastic Beach's campaign.)

February 23rd 2010 *Plastic Beach interactive website is launched*

Murdoc: So after what happened during our expedition to California, we returned back to Plastic Beach. Who do I see there waiting for me? THOSE ZOMBIE FLESH EATING BASTARDS. They somehow found me and my secret location, and now they wanted to turn the island into an interactive online experience! I tried confronting them, but they immediately got down on all fours, and crawled into the island. Like a bunch of ants! 2 minutes later, the Gorillaz website is renovated and updated.

On February 23rd, it was revealed that the countdown would let fans gain access to the online Plastic Beach website. Allowing them to explore the island, play songs, minigames, music videos, interact with the band members, solve puzzles and missions. However, upon launch, the website crashed.

Murdoc: Well, you can't quite get the best reception out in the middle of the ocean, so that's probably why the website wasn't quite working when it was released.

The consistent delay enlisted immediate backlash from the Gorillaz fanbase, and a huge riot broke out across several countries. Gorillaz fans even burnt down the burnt down remains of Kong Studios, as well as robbing stores and committing several acts of homicide.

Murdoc: It's nice that our fans are so passionate about what we do.

After several hours, the website was up and running once more, the riots were immediately put to an end.

Murdoc: I think a dozen people lost their lives during that riot. Though unfortunately, this wouldn't be the last time we piss off our loving fans.

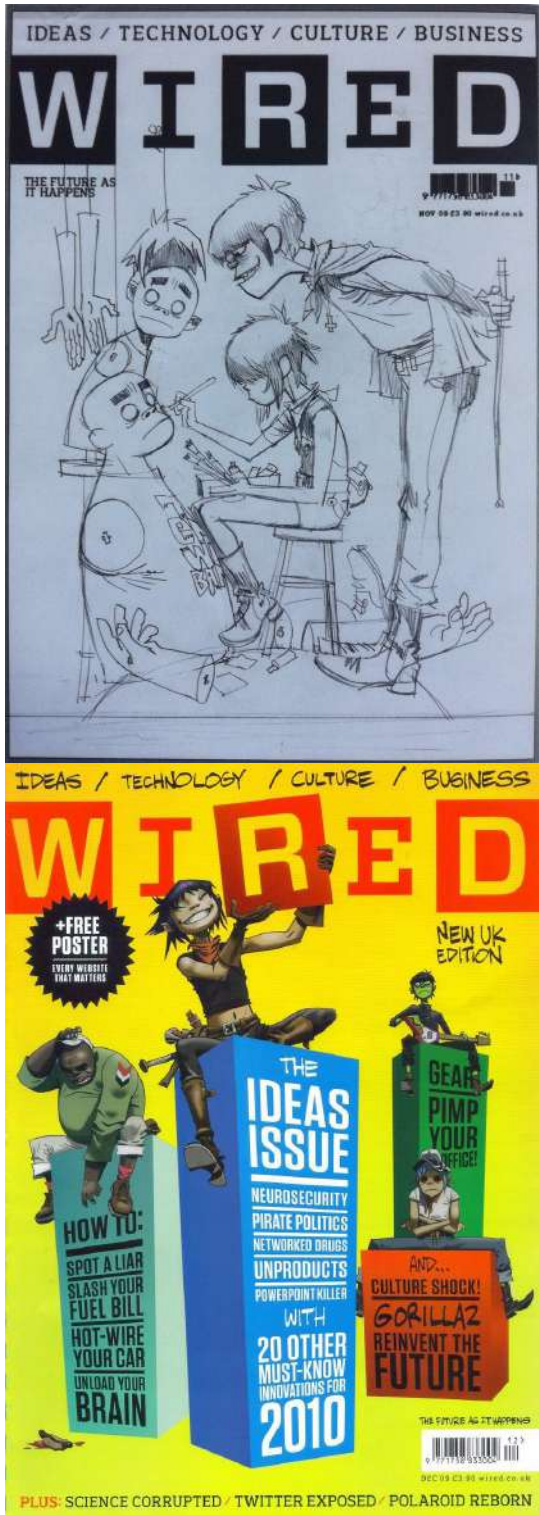
Like the previous Kong website, you were now able to play a point and click adventure style game on the website which utilised the several CCTV cameras which surrounded the island.

Murdoc: That was a swell idea from Zombie Flesh…well, actually I guess it was a bad idea to put the island on our website…cos now it really wasn't a secret anymore…got us cash and visitors though right?

With the website live and the cat being let out of the bag on Murdoc's secret island, EMI used Gorillaz.com as a marketing tool for a genuine Plastic Beach experience…

February 2010 *Plastic Beach Holidays was launched*

After the rocky launch of Plastic Beach's marketing campaign, EMI was thoroughly invested in monetising Gorillaz as much as possible. So, as any ordinary label would do in the same position, EMI launched 'Plastic Beach Holidays' a sunshine saver deal for fans which allowed them to visit Gorillaz new home for the low cost of $999! The getaway received rave reviews on Trip Wizard, and was labelled as a five-star experience.



ABOVE
WIRED Magazine art
Original and Final

EMI shipped a dozen fans on a bi-weekly basis to Plastic Beach in a big cargo container. Upon arrival at the island, fans were quickly greeted by a cartoonish pair known as the Pelican and Seagull.

Murdoc: Christ not those two. The seagull and the pelican? Don't talk to them. They're a couple of idiots. Seriously. Talking birds. What is this? A Pixar movie?

2D: They sounded very familiar.

Murdoc: That's what I thought… too familiar. You know, I remember this one time where we had a couple people shipped in and the power went, I got stuck behind the bookshelf in my study room.

2D: Bookshelf?

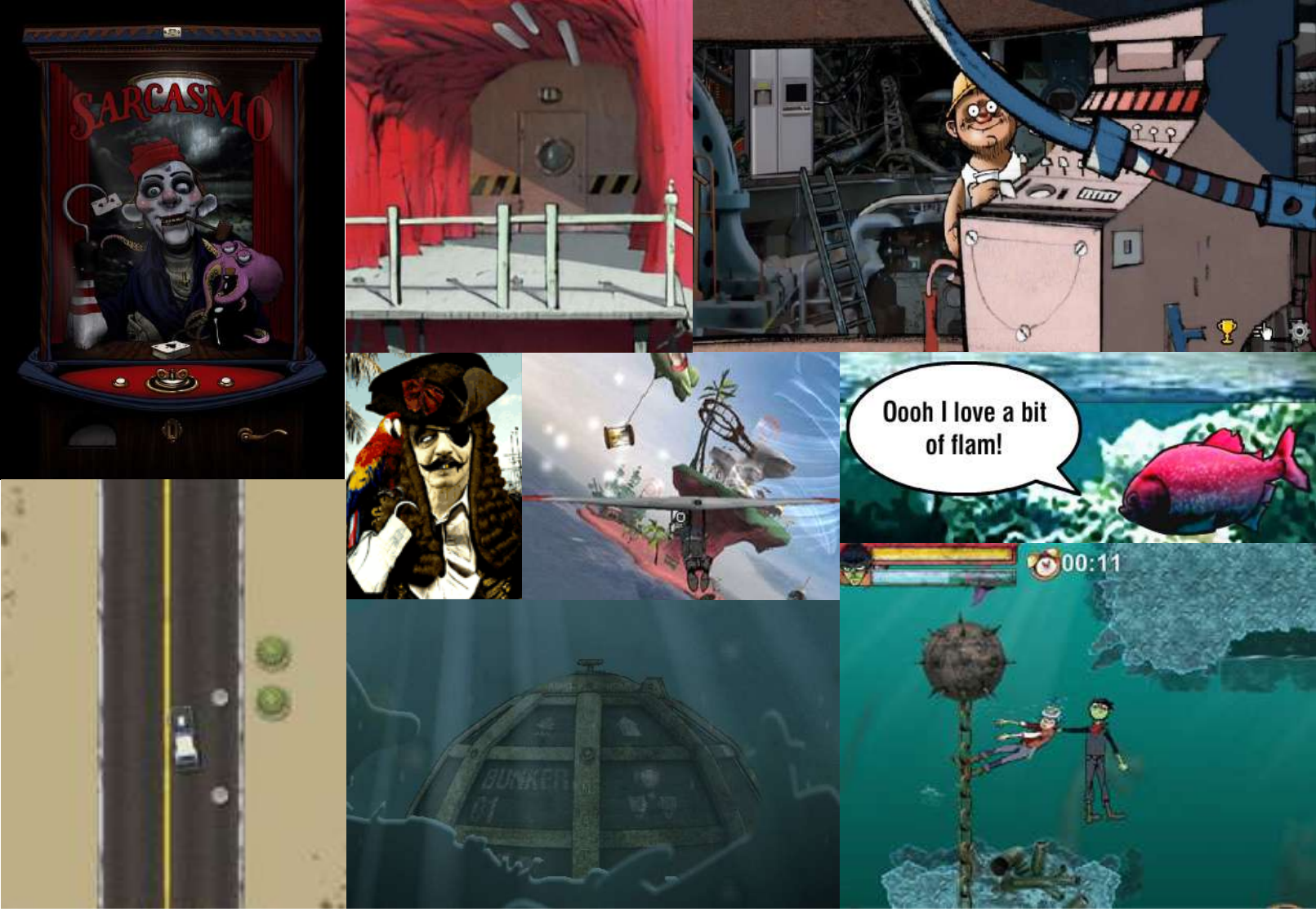
Murdoc: Oh you wouldn't have known being locked downstairs, would you? It worked as a door to my 'War Room'. I used it to keep tabs on the whole island in case of any bandits heading our way looking to cause trouble. It had this huge spiralling staircase leading to a big concrete bunker that somehow got stuck in the core of the island. Anyway, I had one of our fans head down to the boiler room to talk to Dave, our engineer. I don't think he was from around those parts. It seemed like the power was shorting out every two minutes in that place. He had a real thing for demanding tea and making abstract statements. Someone should've told him to put a bell around his trousers…it was very unhygienic. I asked him to fix the boiler, not to show me his bum-crack for three hours.

2D: Oh yeah It's coming back to me now, I had someone come into my room asking about how they could fix the power, I think they fed Murdoc's pink stink fish to the Pelican after he swallowed Dave's spanner or something.

Murdoc: Wanker. I loved that fish, wanted to name the whole record after him but the label just couldn't wrap their heads around it.

2D: I didn't like it, he'd only eat processed tins of flam. Disgusting.

Murdoc: A legally safe knock off of spam, with the main ingredient being racoon meat instead of Pork. Come and get me HFC, I dare you.



2D: They seemed nice enough. Apparently there weren't enough plug sockets to keep the power on upstairs. I let them borrow my multi-plug adaptor to help get the power back on. I only did it cos they helped keep that Whale away from me, if it wasn't for them I would've left you to rot, give you a taste of your own crooked medicine.

Murdoc: Biggest mistake of your entire life telling me that bucko. So the adaptor thing was given to our mate Dave and he fixed everything up for us. All I needed after that was this specific book from my room called 'The Bastard', you have to slide it onto the empty space on the bookshelf to open the door. Simple enough really.

The Bastard was recovered and the entrance to Murdoc's 'War Room' was revealed.

Murdoc: I have to admit I wasn't too happy with EMI opening my front doors to anyone who's pockets were deep enough, but it was a great advantage for me in the end. These losers would do anything I asked them to! Find the missing pages to my magic book? Sure thing! Go down to the docks and do a spot of fishing so we don't starve? No problemo! Waste your hard earned cash over at Big Rick Black's Record Shack? A-Okay! They were paying me to boss them around. It was like I was one of those chicks you'd find on the internet after clicking a dodgy link. It was great for our economy, really. And I didn't have to lift a finger.

Your Very Own Island Paradise!

Choose Plastic Beach for the vacation of a lifetime! Don't take our word for it, here's what our guests say:

On the first day, we explored the beach and found a shopping trolley and an unexploded WWII mine!

★★★★★

Dilbert E, Manchester

Great entertainment. The pirate performance is v realistic. I think I've been kidnapped. Please send help!

★★★★★

Pablo C, Key West

Excellent booze cruise. The drink really helps you forget the stench!

★★★★★

B B McGuinness, London

WHALE WATCHING | BEACH COMBING | SWIMMING WITH SHARKS
SUNSET BOOZE CRUISE | DECONTAMINATED BUFFET

Trip Wizard

*Plastic Beach Inc. are not liable for any shark or whale related attack, injury, disappearance &/or death despite advertising the aforementioned activities. Guests enter the water at their own risk. - just because we offer a service this does not mean its safe, in fact we probably recommend against it. ◊Plastic Beach Inc. does not accept liability if the buffet actually is still contaminated. We won't know until someone eats from it, which no one has in a while. We recommend bringing your own food for the duration of your stay if you have allergies to grey ham, brown water or microplastics.

Stylo Released

January 20th 2010 *Stylo is leaked online.*

On the same day of the album's announcement Stylo was leaked onto the world wide web. Following this disastrous turn of events, NME Radio held its official premiere.

Murdoc: Remember those Black Clouds? They've tracked me down on Plastic Beach already. I've been shot at loads out there. One of them put a hole in my island, nicked the song and leaked it online. You can't plug holes like that anymore in the brave new digital world. Filthy Russian pirates…I'll get 'em back though...don't you worry... I'm good at stuff like that.

January 26th 2010 *Stylo is released as the first single of Plastic Beach*

The single mainly failed to chart successfully, "bubbling under" the Billboard Hot 100 at #103, and only reaching 24 on the US Billboard Alternative Songs chart. It was however the first Gorillaz song to reach any Japanese chart, rising to number eight on the Japan Hot 100. It was also Successful in Mexico where it reached number 7 on the Ingles Airplay chart. In other countries, it was near the bottom or middle of the chart.

Murdoc: I guess the world wasn't really ready for Plastic Beach yet, it was too grand of a concept for music labels and listeners to wrap their small brains around. If Stylo came out today, it would've been our second UK #1 easy.

2D: I sincerely doubt that.

Following the song's release, Reggae artist Eddy Grant made claims that Stylo was similar to his 1983 song 'Time Warp', with Grant considering suing the band and the label. Talks of suit and acknowledgment began on March 15th 2010.

Murdoc: Imagine attempting to sue a cartoon band, for supposedly "stealing" a disco garage song from nearly 20 years ago! Not to mention, that Stylo sounds nothing compared to that Time Warp rubbish.

2D: In all honesty, I wouldn't be surprised if you did actually steal elements of that song for Stylo.

Murdoc: What gives you that impression, D? When have I ever stolen anything?

2D: I don't know, I do like Eddy Grant's music though. (In a hard glaswegian accent) 'WE GONNA ROCK DOON TO ELECTRIC AVENUE! AND THEN WE'LL TAKE IT HIGHER'

Murdoc: Luckily our lawyers and EMI dealt with the situation quietly and privately. It's a shame too, I would've loved to have that bloke come and do a song with us. That's never happening now though.

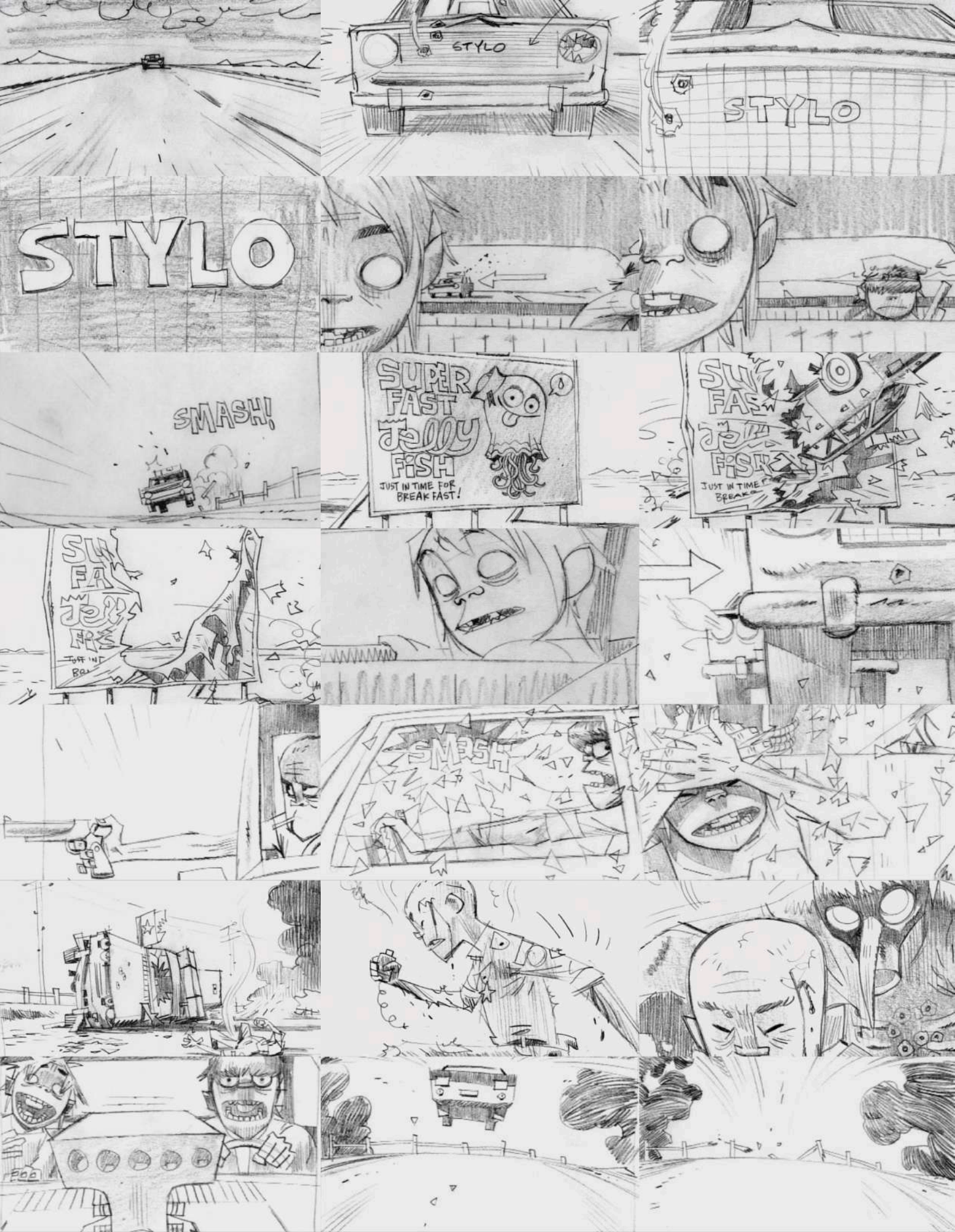
March 1st 2010 *Stylo's music video premiered on the Gorillaz YouTube channel.*

When the video was released, it received regular airplay on MTV and Viva. However, the video no longer received significant airplay after failing to make the Top 100 in the UK. The video was nominated at the 53rd Grammy Awards in the category of Short Form Music Video. The ceremony took place on February 13th 2011. The video lost to Lady Gaga's 'Bad Romance'.

Murdoc: She's such a tit.

2D: I thought you fancied her?

Murdoc: I used to, then she stole my Grammy from me… I'll poke her fucking face.


STYLO
STYLO
STYLO
SMASH!
SUPER FAST Jelly FISH
JUST IN TIME FOR BREAK FAST!
SMASH

Chapter 4
Plastico, where Green Green Glows

"Some kind of nature
Come from within us
Oh Lord, forgive me
It's got to come and find us
All we are is dust'

Plastic Beach Released

March 8th 2010 *Plastic Beach is released*

'Plastic Beach' the album finally hit the globe, sending music and culture critics scrabbling for their thesaurus in an attempt to find alternative words for phrases such as "really good". The album debuted at number two on the UK Albums Chart, selling 74,432 copies in its first week. The album also debuted at number two on the US Billboard 200 with first-week sales of 112,000 copies, of which 62,000 were digital copies. As of 25 March 2010, Plastic Beach sold 8,136 copies in Japan and debuted at number 17 on the Oricon Albums Chart. Selling 13,822 copies in France, Plastic Beach debuted at number two on the SNEP albums chart. Accumulating roughly 1.45 million in album sales, which was a huge decline from Gorillaz previous album which sold 8 million copies.

Murdoc: As I said, the world just wasn't ready for my vision yet. Not to mention that EMI completely mucked up the promotion for this album. I should strangle cocker Wiffy Smiffy.

Despite the mediocre sales, The album's reception was feverish with journalists and fans alike eager to absorb this new Gorillaz sonic missive, luxuriating in the sumptuous melodies and checking the back of the sleeve for subtle hidden meanings of asinine jokes. The consensus was almost universal; amid the synthetic clatter of waterlogged keyboards, the soaring exotica of Arabic Strings, the shady, brooding guitar and bass-lines from West London's finest and loose, lysergic elasticated United Stated raps, all of these beeps, bloops, thumps, belches and clouds of billowing melancholia swirled together to conjure up a truly phantastical musical vision; an illustrious Technicolored 'postcard from the edge of the world', hand delivered by none other than Murdoc Niccals himself….

Activity in the Gorillaz world too went up another level again with Murdoc mouthing off in every newspaper, magazine and leaflet he could enter about how great he was and what a masterpiece he'd made and the usual tripe about how everyone else was rubbish. In whatever form they now currently stood, it was official; the weird, wonky and wonderful global sensation that is Gorillaz were back once more...

Entertainment Weekly, 3rd March: "A half decade after their last release, 2005's multi-platinum sophomore outing Demon Days, the band has returned, once again gilding their four-character core with a delightfully random roster of guest stars: Snoop Dogg, legendary soul smoothie Bobby Womack, Lou Reed, and the Clash's Mick Jones among them. Like its name, Plastic Beach has a sharp tang of cognitive dissonance — its songs sound like dispatches from a crew of hip-kid astronauts, unmoored in some space-dust ether. Sometimes, especially in the album's latter half, that sonic drift can come off as dull, and even dispiriting. Often, though, they do it with style: Womack brings an organic jolt to the mentholated Casio cool of 'Stylo', while the sparse, glitchy base of 'White Flag' is embroidered with brilliant threads of bhangra. In the end, Beach offers a vision of the future as digitised kitsch: groovy, yes, but lonely too."

Murdoc: Oh god…I'm ready.

The Guardian, 7th March: "Its electronic pop songs are more sneaky than sure-fire. But from premise to execution, it is probably Gorillaz's most engrossing project so far, rolling from space-age electro to mournful soul and back again. "Where's north from here?" wonders Mark E Smith on the glam stomp of 'Glitter Freeze'.

Murdoc: Mhm….oh yeah.

The Times, 6th March: "The list of guest contributors on Plastic Beach isn't short. The single Stylo — a detached, motorik gem — features the rapper Mos Def providing a pulsing flow and the R&B legend Bobby Womack lending a pained, soaring vocal. White Flag could be plucked from an Albarn STA Travel mashup, mixing the National Orchestra for Arabic Music with the grime acts Bashy and Kano, while Gruff Rhys and De La Soul combine to create brilliant splashes of comic strip colour on Superfast Jellyfish. Even the established curmudgeons Lou Reed and Mark E. Smith appear, Sesame Street-style, on consecutive tracks. It's Gorillaz. Why wouldn't they? But for all the guests, it remains a Gorillaz album. It whirrs and twitches and thumps like one, and beguiles and entertains with the same enjoyment as its predecessors, only refined, at times, to the point of perfection. Albarn's melancholy sprechgesang and an allegorical narrative arc — something about an island in the Pacific, with the proliferation of plastic and synthetic waste recurring motifs — remind us that irony figures far less here than we might think. It's a cartoon band creating music for tomorrow and whose influence will probably last for years."

Murdoc: Here is the issue, one of the reasons why I built Plastic Beach and made this whole sodding record in the first place, was to make some cash to get Malthus and those Black Clouds off my back. But because the album tanked, I still didn't have enough money to pay them back.

2D: I don't think you would've been able to pay them back even if Plastic Beach was a success, maybe if you stopped wasting it all on cheap cheeks and rum you'd -

Murdoc: - Because I was still low on funds, I was stumped as to where to go from here….but then I cracked open the perfect idea. We needed money, yeah? So why not get some of that lucrative cash from none other than our adoring fans with a scam that would make the others look tame in comparison! The perfect plan…the perfect scam…

March 9th 2010 *G-Club Launches*

Murdoc: That was it! A rinky dink subscription based service to draw in our fans, pop 30 quid from em easy. Soon I'd have enough money to get those gunners off my case.

I'm appalled Mr. Niccals… I mean scamming a mafia group, sure… but scamming your own fans?

Murdoc: Yeah well… being a Gorillaz fan doesn't come cheap baby, that's for sure.

The club began selling new merchandise, including shirts, lithographs, badges, postcards, greeting cards, a mug, a tote bag & patch sets. Along with 25% off discounts to the Gorillaz Store, and early access to purchasing Gorillaz concert tickets.

Murdoc: I wasn't really quite scamming now, was I?

It should be noted that G-Club received a delayed launch, similarly to the Plastic Beach website. There was also additional promised content that never came to fruition.

Murdoc: This all just sounds like whining to me, you sad your Noodle T-Shirt never arrived? Awh, poor baby! Would you maybe like a free wallpaper instead?

Following a bit of fan backlash, and sign ups being closed down for an extended period of time. G-Club was relaunched as Sub Division in May 2010.

Despite this renovation, backlash, criticism, and complaints continued to flow through Murdoc Niccals email inbox. Delays continued, merchandise was slow, and promises were still not fulfilled. Infamously one situation, in which a toy Stylo car was promised to be released and exclusive for Sub Division members. This never occurred, and Gorillaz management was forced to clean up Murdoc Niccals mess on their own.

Murdoc: Look alright, we tried making that one work. We just couldn't secure the rights from Chevrolet to actually make it happen. So quit bugging me! As for everything else? Walk to HMV you lazy twats! Sitting there on your laptops ordering mugs like some kind of gremlin, good grief.

2D: Didn't you say that the whole point of this subscription based club was to scam fans?

Murdoc: Yeah well… erm… did I say scam? Scam our fans? Oh dear, who would do such a thing like that? What are you on about? Hit yer head again eh?

The Coachella Incident

Following the G-Club launch, Murdoc began making plans for Gorillaz to return to performing live for the first time in nearly four years. The band set off to make their live comeback, headlining the 2010's Coachella festival.

Murdoc: Now as you know I'm a man or two down on the regular Gorillaz band member front, we've got Cyborg but Russel's still missing, well I say missing, that's not true. He's swimming his way over to Plastic Beach as we speak. I can see him in the water. Headed this way. Big bald-headed this way. And he's MASSIVE. Must've been something he ate. I've got 2D with me.

2D: Hello!

Murdoc: But y'know, he ain't what you'd call heavy artillery. Not really the kind of guns big enough to headline a festival as a first proper Gorillaz gig since we split in 2006. Which, even by my quite arrogant and ambitious standards, is a bit cheeky.

2D: What a disaster.

Murdoc: So, I can't really use these guys, they're in scraps. Anyway, to cut a long story short, with our regular Gorillaz band in pieces, I commissioned this band, right, a bunch of crack-troop session musicians, former henchmen and a couple of genuine rock legends and got them all headed-up by Mr. Damon Albarn, my old musical compadre, and Advisor-In-Chief to Gorillaz. He's always been on hand to help us out, even if he is a credit-stealing pillock, he's the best stand in.

2D: He was my vocal coach when it started out so he seemed like our best bet.

Murdoc: This is how it went down…under his watchful gaze he took a couple of members of his old Gorillaz live band setup, Mike Smith the keyboard player, Cass Browne the old Gorillaz live drummer, and mixed in some new blood of the likes of Jeff Wooton, genius guitar protégé, a second keyboardist named Jesse Hackett and Gabriel Wallace, a Chicago rhythm heavyweight on extra drums...and then added a sprinkle of some genuine 'old school boys' with a pedigree that any dog would tear their own tail off to play with. D'you know what I'm saying? Get on this!!! To finish this band off right Damon book-ended this entourage with two former members of The Clash. YEAH! I KNOW! Fantastic! The Paul Simonon and The Mick Jones from your favourite band and mine.... THE CLASH!!

2D: I don't really wanna be here but playing live with The Clash got my belly turning like nothing blud!

Murdoc: Excuse me, I'm talking.

2D: Sorry.

Murdoc: So we gathered this lot up, stuck them in a room together with a crate of rum and 40 Rothman cigarettes and let them work out how to play MY album live. Mmmm… My hearts gone all fluttery.

2D: Do you want the defibrillator again?

Murdoc: So when they were ready, and sounding ship-shaped, we stuck them out on the road on a tear-up round The British Isles, a bunch of secret fanclub gigs, to see if they could cut it live with the fans.

March 21st 2010 *Wedgewood Rooms, Portsmouth, United Kingdom*
March 22nd 2010 *Trinity Centre, Bristol, United Kingdom*
March 23rd 2010 *Junction, Cambridge, United Kingdom*
March 25th 2010 *Old Market, Brighton, United Kingdom*
March 26th 2010 *Irish Centre, Birmingham, United Kingdom*
March 27th 2010 *Engine Shed, Lincoln, United Kingdom*

Murdoc: I spent the last month or so sneaking off to the rehearsals, then stalking them up and down the country on this trail of secret gigs they performed. I was always in disguise. Had to be...I went once as a chubby purple-haired Goth girl with big floppy lallies, another time I went dressed in lederhosen and an Alpine feathered cap, looking like the small wooden idiot boy Pinocchio. Another time I went dressed as some kind of fucking nerd. No-one would recognise me dressed like that, would they.

2D: It's true, only time I've seen him with glasses

Murdoc: D, please, the grown ups are talking.

For these rehearsal shows, no guest collaborators or even visuals were used. Following these gigs, the band returned back to Plastic Beach, and began to prepare for their big proper live comeback, headlining Coachella.

Murdoc: (Ahem) And my reasoning behind all this stupid behaviour...? Well, I needed to check out the band, y'know, incognito. There's too many goons on my trail for me to go out as Murdoc Niccals. And of course the G-club Gorillaz fans would just rip me apart. So I went in disguise. You see, I needed to check where we're at, because, (and this is the thing)....I'm training this band to be my, our, Gorillaz backing band LIVE at Coachella.

ABOVE
The Plastic Beach Tour Crew
"Best band I've ever had, honest"
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc: This lot are going to be my Gorillaz backing band! How heavy is that? I'm going to take this lot over to LA, and there we've got some rehearsals with the collaborators, people like Bobby Womack, Little Dragon, The Hypnotic Brass Ensemble and Shaun Ryder and er...Mark E. Smith...and Mos Def and De La Soul and, well, I could go on but it'd be ridiculous. Especially when I mention the choirs and the recorded visuals and the exotic orchestras… Anyway, if this lot cut it and it don't sound like a punch-up in a music shop, I'll insert myself like the heavyweight showbiz legend I am, right slap-bang into the middle of all of it, LIVE.... AT COACHELLA!!! oh yeah, GORILLAZ are headlining the magnificent Coachella festival. That's right! We're bringing our King Kong-sized sound right out to you Stateside to stomp all over your festival. How amazing is that? It'll be the history of music, worldwide, performing for you live on stage! If this doesn't blow your socks out the park you're just dead inside. Seriously. This is it. This is the one. There will be no other gig like this. I'm polishing my bass as f-f-f-ffuriously as I can. Ineedabighitofrumrightnowtocalmmedown...Mmm… (slurrrrp!!)

Gorillaz live band took the stage for their first proper live performance, headlining the sunday and closing the Coachella festival, in America's Palm Springs. The band received a rapturous reception and a glut of euphoric reviews. Only one problem. Murdoc hadn't made it to the stage. A missing work visa had meant, moments before his dramatic appearance, he had been arrested and frogmarched to his silly little submarine, and deported back to Plastic Beach. No member of the original Gorillaz band had appeared that night, and yet the audience reaction was still jubilant. What could this mean? Has Murdoc been thwarted by the very band he commissioned to play his songs? Has he himself been sidelined by a sideshow act? Quite weakly he managed to make one or two brief interruptions to the stage proceedings via satellite but nothing more…

April 16th 2010 *Rehearsals for Coachella commence at Center Staging, Burbank, California*

Murdoc: What a pointless week that was. Sugary Beelzebub! The US authorities man. Total bummers. I was all hyped up the night before my departure, just rocking around my Plastic Beach, tweeting my nuts off. Rum n' rohypnol on the go. Bags packed full of flick-knives and rum and spare nappies and capes and Satnavs. I couldn't have been more fired up about this gig.

Murdoc: So, next right, I revved up my crappy little submarine, and after it spent two hours on its own zipping round the bay like a wonky Toyota (I have to upgrade that thing), I popped a couple of Xanies then purred my way over to the States. Feeling a bit mongy, like, but nice and calm inside…. Mmmm…. It was great… Took me 24 hours of underwater hi-jinx but I eventually arrived in LA on the Tuesday, unzipped my wetsuit, and then checked myself into The Roosevelt, on Hollywood Boulevard. Nice! The so-called 'party hotel' of Tinsel Town. Spacious rooms, clean toilets, big wet swimming pool. Took a quick shower and then scooted down to the rehearsal venue where we were testing out the big screens...They look enormous! The Gorillaz backing band were in top form. Keyboards – check. Two sets of drums – check. Backing Vocals (four) – check. One Damon Albarn – check. Half the Clash – check. All good, and sounding unique! Let's roll out the visuals and guests…. But next thing, right, I notice we're a few guests short of the full meringue. Turns out that due to that sodding Icelandic volcano explosion which went off we missed out on having the likes of Mos Def, The Hypnotic Brass, Shaun Ryder, Una Stubbs, Mark. E. Smith Bashy and Kano (or "Ashy" and "VolKano" as they're now known round these parts), Rosie Wilson…loads of our sparkly glittery highlights…all stranded in Blighty with no way of getting to L.A. My theory is that was Paul Simonon's bass that managed to shift the ash out that Volcano. Nice work, Simmo!

April 17th 2010 *Murdoc is deported back to Plastic Beach*

Murdoc: I've just finished up the last line of my er….'frantic memoirs' when this happened… Saturday morning. 3:00 am. I got a knock at the door. Pause. Then it gets booted in. Some baloney-eating copper is standing there, with his squashed piggy nose telling me to get up and get dressed. Him and his stupid chubby sidekick. You what? "I'm already dressed, mate" I said, "Nappy, boots and cape. That's how I roll. D'you get me?" Obviously not. Even in my sleep I dress for success… So anyway, they yank me out of bed, and they're barking about how I can't stay in the country. I've gotta get my peachy ass out of the U.S. and back to Plastic Beach. Now! No work visa. NO WORK VISA? Are you SERIOUS? I'm playing the biggest gig of my life tomorrow! But no. They escorted me, well 'frogmarched' me with my spindly green arm rammed right up to the back of me neck all the way to the coastal border, and shoved me back in my sub. Bit unnecessary. But, yeah, for me the Coachella concert was cancelled immediately. I was made to tootle of my way from the shores of America in my own little submarine back to my little garbage dump idyll in the middle of nowhere. Swine! SWEINHUNTZ! The Gorillaz backing band had to do the gig for me…

April 18th 2010 *Gorillaz perform at Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, Indio, California*

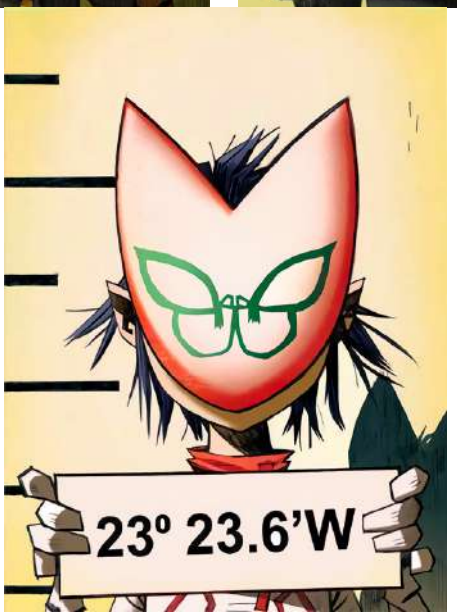
Murdoc: I missed out of the greatest gig of my life! Handed it on a platter to a sliver-gilded hired pick-up backing band. The very band I've been training for months, now get all the glory of headlining the Coachella festival on the Sunday night, bringing down the house to rapturous applause….I watched it all from a video link up I'd arranged last minute….just heartbreaking. I almost wept. Watching these trained imposters steal my thunder! (big slurp of rum n' ginger…all better now…) So my rundown of the concert… Well, from the video cam footage I saw, it did look like an all-spectacular…something Coachella had never seen before.

PAUL
Roland
YAMAHA

Murdoc: The best closing set the festival had ever seen by all accounts… And they're all my songs! So imagine just how grand and awe-inspiring it'll look when I'm in there. The real Gorillaz! Right in the middle of it all! Plus the artists who couldn't make over Stateside. Makes my heart go all butterflies just thinking about it…. Still, such a bummer I couldn't make it. Heartbreak aside I still managed to interrupt the performance with a message to my mate George, from Iowa, Des Moines just to let him know I got the stuff he wanted…I guess I'll have to pass it on to him in Londonia. I sort you out at The Roundhouse if you're coming George. And where am I now? Kicking my heels back on Plastic Beach, that's where! Oh…The winds round here roar black operas into my ears. Tales of dust and ash and traumas, singing songs of desolation and hopes unfulfilled. All eternity wrapped into a single melancholic crappy midnight gale…I cannot seem to leave this rock. It seems like my Plastic Beach is growing now too. Take a look at this. This beach in Hawaii is turning out the same as my place. Their beach is evolving into plastic too, all washed up by the sea…The horror is spreading…! Just without the cases of rum!

Murdoc blogged his Coachella discontent on the MTV blog sites and in doing so also reported on the subsequent events; the live band's movement from Palm Springs across to New York and their appearance on the Steve Colbert Show…without him. You could feel Murdoc's venom dripping off the digital page. Still, he managed to collect himself and looked forward to a victorious return to the stage at London's Camden Roundhouse shows to be played at the end of April. And this, he assured his audience, would feature the full set of the collaborators and a truly crowning appearance by himself. Over the next few weeks the Gorillaz live band, minus Murdoc and company, seemed to appear ubiquitously in the UK, performing a special on the 'Later with Jools Holland' TV show, as well as various radio stations, interviews, newspapers and more…

Murdoc: So, where were we? Oh yeah right, back in that world, while I just got escorted back to the island, the Gorillaz band continued without me. They had to. Straight on to New York, to do more promotion. A session at the legendary Electric Ladyland studios where Mr J. Hendrix laid down his seminal album. Historic! I think they've still got the original headphones he used in there. By all accounts they were well crackly…Then what next hmmm…An AOL performance, and then some other bizness. I'm glad these were just karaoke sessions otherwise I would have busted my nut over not being in on it. Still I just couldn't hold my lip when it came to The Steve Colbert Report. That's this TV show that's big in America apparently. So I got wind that the boys and girls of the Gorillaz backing band were going to spring up on this programme, to play Stylo, again without yours truly. I thought it was only fair to let Steve Colbert know just exactly what he was getting for his bucks…I left him a little answerphone message to tell him that it wasn't the real Gorillaz band, just a cod interpretation of it. I love them but I did think it'd be good to rain on their parade…Steve Colbert quite rightly flipped his lid when he found out he'd been hustled. The interview with Jamie and Damon well and truly nose-dived into the surreal as soon as Steve got my message, so I'm glad to have helped out there….Or ruined it, if you like. Whatever. Still none of that matters now. The past is a foreign country, as they say. Next Up!!!!



Roundhouse Shows

Murdoc: All of this is now loading the bases for The Camden Roundhouse in a magnificent style. Which I most certainly WILL be appearing at. My glorious return! And all the 'work visa' issues have just gone away. I just need to turn up. I'm a UK passport holder so there's no worry of me not making this one. D'you get me…? I'm legit. Boy, am I'm looking forward to this one. I'm applying the rosin to the shaft end of my bass….making it extra twangy for the Camden kids worldwide…POW! And this time we'll have the full set. We've got The Mos Def, The Hypnotic Brass, Shaun Ryder, Mark. E Smith….the works… Bobby Womack, Bashy & Kano, Little Dragon, The Syrian Orchestra….Gruff from the Super Furry Animals, Bootie Brown…De La Soul…This will be the one! This will be the concert to end them all! Coachella got ruined because of the glaring gaping cavernous absence of me, Murdoc Niccals. That was like an Indiana Jones film without say…Harrison Ford. And I guess it would've helped too if, say, the Gorillaz guitarist Noodle was there too. Or Russel on drums. And having 2D singing instead of Damon Albarn probably would've made some kind of difference. But the Camden Roundhouse concerts will have it all in spades! The full set. All the band, all the guests and all the back up we need to make this a gig to end them all. It's funny to think that Gorillaz started out here in this very spot all those years ago. Our very first gig was at the infamous Camden Brownhouse, just down the road from the Roundhouse. We've pushed our boats to all four corners of the globe.

Murdoc: The World is now Gorillaz-shaped! And now we've come back to our old stomping ground. Camden, London, UK. So here's to Thursday, and here's to me getting off this miserable island once more. It's sending shivers up my spine now, this place. The island has started to rumble. Just before I left for LA it started playing spooky old jazz hits from the 50's, eerie melodies wafting around its weeping shores. "Midnight, The Stars and You" I think the tune was... like something from the Overlook Hotel…I think something, some dark spirit, is trapped in this Plastic Beach. And it's beginning to emerge….I'm actually hoping Russel gets here sooner rather than later now, which I never thought I'd hear myself say…We shall see then…Anyway, this is me Captain Murdoc of the Gorillaz Plastic Beach enterprise, signing off and hoping to see all of your pretty, pretty faces over in London at the Camden Roundhouse! It promises to be an incredi…. Hey! Wait a sec.! Just had a flick through the TV Times and what's this? Apparently Gorillaz are playing the Jools Holland Show this Tuesday. In London. Tomorrow! Really? No-one informed me. Right, best get my harris over to England sharpish. Can't miss that one too… Christ. It's impossible to get a decent update round these parts…Who's tour-managing this thing? Houdini?! Plastic Beach? It's a concrete nightmare….Right. I'm off.

April 29th & 30th 2010 *Gorillaz perform at the Camden Roundhouse, London, United KIngdom*

By the time of the Camden Roundhouse though Murdoc was more than primed, eager to retake his place on the stage. But again it was not to be. During his stateside deportation his passport has been stupidly mislaid and with no chance of a duplicate being issues in time, once again the crowd were treated to a performance from the flesh and blood counterfeit band. Well, them and a full house of guests, colleagues & collaborators spanning the breadth of the Gorillaz back catalogue. An exhilarating and explosive event which garnered only 5 star reviews in most National newspapers. Damon Albarn and the live band were thoroughly commended for their performances, their talents, abilities, vision and collective collaborative outlook. His thunder duly stolen, Murdoc's thoughts now turned to murder…

Murdoc: They're going to capture me killing those bastards in all my billowing glory! I've had my nappy silver –plated for this one…

2D: Can I talk again yet?

Gorillaz live at Camden Roundhouse was broadcasted Live to MTV worldwide on both performance dates.

Superfast Jellyfish Released

March 8th 2010 *Superfast Jellyfish visualiser is released*

The visual for Superfast Jellyfish was released as a part of the online iTunes deluxe edition of Plastic Beach; and was later uploaded onto YouTube one day ahead of the official single's release.

The video, contrary to popular belief, was not actually directed by Jamie Hewlett, nor did it feature any of the Gorillaz band members. It was in fact an original promo piece commissioned by EMI & Gorillaz Productions. The visual accompaniment was produced by Zulu Studios in association with Flying Ant Films.

Murdoc: We were planning on doing this as a proper promo video ourselves, I had this whole plan to strip 2D down to his tighty whities, put some roller skates on him, and have him dance around with the CGI jellyfish.

2D: I don't remember agreeing to this

Murdoc: Right, draw your sharks.

2D: I hate you.

Murdoc: Love you too twinkletoes, now draw your sharks.

The music video opens with a black and white scene depicting a dishevelled man crawling out of bed. The man then realised that it was time for breakfast and pulls out a box of Superfast Jellyfish before stuffing it into the microwave. After several seconds of waiting, a technicolor animated jellyfish pops out of the box to greet the man who was anxiously waiting for breakfast. The jellyfish then floats out of the microwave and engages in an elaborate psychedelic dance sequence with the man; accompanied by an entire school of jellyfish. The video ends with returning to a black and white closeup on the man devouring the colourful creature and slurping its tentacles into his mouth.

Murdoc: Those knob-nibblers over at EMI just wanted to push out as much promotional material for Plastic Beach as they could, which even led to decisions that went completely over my head…when I saw the video premiere on YouTube, I blew a blood vessel. I don't even trust that bloke Jamie Hewlett with our videos, and now EMI was pulling this tosh behind my back? I'll ship em out here and feed all of their management to Massive Dick if they pull that shit again.

May 9th 2010 *Superfast Jellyfish single is released*

The Superfast Jellyfish single was released on the five year anniversary of the Feel Good Inc. single, a Gorillaz collaboration which also featured De La Soul.

2D: Oh, that's clever. I see what they did there.

The single, like most of Plastic Beach's singles, did not chart well. Only charting #33 on the Australian ARIA Urban Singles Chart, #50 on the Danish Dance Chart, #17 on Mexico Ingles Airplay, and #28 on the UK Dance Chart.

Murdoc: I think starting around this point onwards is where things sorta, well, began to fall apart. The album had been out for months and wasn't breaking sales, the singles weren't charting. I think this is where our luck began to run dry.

2D: I wish Noodle and Russel were here, they'd've known what to do.

Trouble Below Decks: The 02 Walk Through

May 13th 2010 *Murdoc and company arrive at London's O2 Arena for rehearsals*

In April, a revolt. Mutiny! The very band that Murdoc commissioned to perform the Gorillaz songs decided to cut out their Captain. Perhaps they'd tired of Murdoc's continuous 'no-shows', perhaps this sudden new found fame had simply gone to their heads. Whatever. It seems they believed that Murdoc and the others were surplus to requirements, deadwood now and that they'd be better, far better off toughing it out on their own.

Murdoc: Myself, 2D and our Cyborg Noodle went off to the O2 arena the other day to do a little spot of rehearsing, but you know, in the actual venue. Only to be confronted by that sodding Gorillaz live band again! You know, the one with Damon Albarn in it? And half The Clash, 50% of The Clash! Then, then, this time right they actually stopped us getting to the stage. Then the O2, do you know what they've gone and done? They've gone and used the footage to advertise the gigs!

Footage of the band dressed as grubby, surly-faced sailors appearing to prevent Murdoc, 2D and Cyborg Noodle taking the stage at the O2 was hastily cut together and voiced over by a Geordie to advertise the forthcoming concerts. The humiliation was a step too far.

Murdoc: Oh no…not them…IT'S MY BAND!

Murdoc again took to the airways broadcasting on XFM from Plastic Beach and in between playing tracks, announced his intention to kill off the Gorillaz live band. Only a cartoon could get away with it. He hoped…

2D: But we are playing that place, right?

Murdoc: Yeah yeah, oh no, without a doubt, yeah. After not being able to make it to Coachella, and then missing out on the Roundhouse shows, I tell you buddy, there is no way I'm missing out again. y'know, Gorillaz ain't just Damon Albarn and his gang of hapless goons, ITS US! And there'll be curtains for anyone who stops us.

2D: Uh, yeah…ok, uh yeah curtains, yeah I get you. Yeah no one rubs me out, yeah! I'll bloody kill you.

Murdoc: My sentiments exactly…so you in?

2D: Uh, yeah.

Murdoc: Great!

2D: Uh, yeah…ok.

Murdoc: Russel will probably be back by the show. I'm sure he will sort them out.

2D: Yeah well, if he doesn't kill you first.

Murdoc: Hey! Look at the size of that whale over there!

2D: KKKKKKAGHHSHS…AHHHHHHH

Priority tickets to see Gorillaz at the O2, and nationwide, went on sale to O2 customers on May 19th 2010. The concert was initially supposed to take place on September 14th & 15th 2010 before being delayed to November 14th & 16th

On Melancholy Hill Released

June 4th 2010 *Madam ident video is leaked online.*

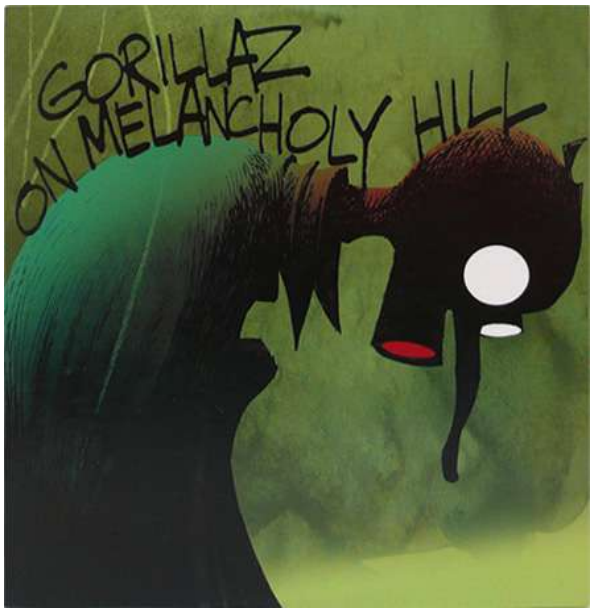
Events shifted when the mythical media apparently confirming Noodle's survival finally rose to the surface and plopped itself on to the Internet. The world witnessed video footage of what appears to be Noodle, the real guitarist from Gorillaz, on board a boat, an ocean liner at sea under the name of M. Harriet, coming under vicious attack from pirate jets. Some toffee-nosed steward then comes racing along the corridor to evacuate the ship. He knocks on a door, finding the room's occupier to be a girl; her face concealed by a cat mask. Having alerted her to the danger, instead of grabbing her belongings and following the steward to safety, the masked girl opens a case, takes out a machine gun and strides off down the corridor to do business. Shocking stuff, but is this the first real evidence of Noodle's endurance? Was she too fighting her way back to the band? I mean…it would be nice to see the young Noodle back in the Gorillaz group. If only to stop Murdoc doing every interview himself. Over the course of four days, Murdoc reacted live to this grand revelation via Twitter.com.

@MurdocGorillaz: Who's the girl with the cat face? Every click I make I see a girl with a cat's face and the body of a Japanese guitar prodigy. So familiar - and yet so wrong. I thought it was...but it couldn't be, could it? I need to stop spiking my own rum with rohypnol...

June 8th 2010 *Noodle ident is officially released online via The Sun.*

@MurdocGorillaz: That's her isn't it?! Just watched that new footage! THAT'S HER! She's alive! And..er...she's armed. But she's ALIVE! NOODLE!!!! She's been missing since El Manana. Couldn't even find her in Hell! But SHE'S BACK! And she is being attacked by those damn pirate scumbags! Where's this footage from?! Where's that boat? I Need to...I'll figure it out in my sub. Must get Noodle…

Following the release of the ident, Gorillaz revealed a Sub Division event in which fans were able to see an exclusive screening of the On Melancholy Hill music video. Two screenings were held at a secret location in Soho, London on two different dates. Only two sub division members were able to attend each screening, with the Sub Divisioners having to participate in a contest to win. Unsurprisingly, none of the Gorillaz band members were seen at these private screenings…



ABOVE
On Melancholy Hill Single Art

@MurdocGorillaz: Me 2D and Cyborg are in the sub, heading for Noodle. Hopefully she's surrounded by dead pirates…not the other way round…Actually this teams a bit duff, isn't it? Me and 2D against gun-toting pirates? Er…Hang on in there Noodle. Some form of help is on its way.

June 14th 2010 *On Melancholy Hill music video is released*

Upon its release, the On Melancholy Hill music video rose high in the iTunes video charts, reaching #1 in the UK, US, and Ireland. #2 in Australia and Canada, and #3 in Japan. The video was stuck in a fierce competition with Lady Gaga's 'Alejandro' video, which it mostly lost too…

Murdoc: ...

Er…

Murdoc: Noodle's been through worse. I guess me and the crew will have to form another search party tomorrow.

July 25th 2010 *On Melancholy Hill single is released*

'On Melancholy Hill' entered the UK Singles Chart at #133, before peaking at #78. After entering at #20 on the UK Dance Chart, the single peaked at #13.

@MurdocGorillaz: No sign of Noodle still. And no info on where that Noodle footage is from. Taking my shark sub out again. See what the morning brings…

SMASH!
I ♥ BEIRUT
CLICK!

A Big Field in Somerset & The Arabian Nights

May 26th 2010 *An unexpected announcement was made on Gorillaz.com.*

The band were to play Glastonbury's Pyramid stage in the headline slot of Friday night as a last minute draft in on the 11th hour after rock legends U2 were forced to cancel their scheduled appearance due a severe back injury which left singer Bono unable to perform.

Murdoc: A cover-up dreamt up for damage-limitation purposes by a well-oiled press machine? Maybe. Maybe he's been detained in a Mongolian jail for playing a strenuous public game of Twister with a couple of greased-up goats. Either way, I wish him a speedy recovery.

Murdoc took to the press, despite the previous actions of Damon and his live band taking the stage for Gorillaz live shows, Murdoc was a hundred percent confident that he would finally make it on stage for the Glastonbury festival.

Murdoc: We're like some great big horrible warship pulling into the Bay of Glastonbury to save the day. It was us or The Beatles and they split up years ago. The previous soldiers got pulled from duty last minute so it's up to my Plastic Beach naval cavalry to sail in and sort the battlefield out. I can assure you though, I'm bringing extra troops. Loads of them. Glastonbury will be ours... cutlasses drawn, trumpets ready. We're coming in. Headlining Glastonbury, for us, is a big operation. You see, we're not a four-piece from Colchester. We're a festival all of our own - musicians, the collaborators, their people, their people's people, plus crew, lighting designers, LCD operators, engineers, videos.

2D: - spanners.

Murdoc: Drivers, rum manufactures, tincture holders. Putting a show on for us involves commandeering people from all round the globe. We're really going to have to step up our game for this one. Pull in every comrade we can. The songs are faultless.

2D: Although you can't really play it, so we keep having to bring in extra bass players.

2D yelps in pain as Murdoc socks a nice smooth punch across his mouth.

Murdoc: Will we be better than U2 would've been? Well, yes, I'd say we have the upper hand for Gorillaz fans. Then again U2, they've had what? 30, 35 years of catalogue to choose from. So I think they'd probably cater to the tastes of U2 fans somewhat better. We may be playing to a disgruntled U2 audience. Who knows? All we can do is our best. Anyway, it's great to be the underdog, give you something to aim for. And there are loads of other artists I want to check out - Snoop, Mos Def and The Hypnotic Brass are all playing. But then again, I can watch them with us when we play, maybe...I genuinely feel sorry for Bono and U2. Glastonbury Festival really is the Mecca for all music fans, so for a band to have to cancel last minute must twist your melon right round. But if we can send them any kind of tribute, that would be to give what was their audience the very best show we can possibly do. Send Glastonbury into meltdown, in their place. How's that sound?

2D: What if it rains?

Murdoc: Floods in Glastonbury? That happened when I took Noodle…we'll carry on regardless. I don't think, all things considered, that Gorillaz would be thwarted at this stage by a spot of rain, do you? Anyway I like storms. They're electric.

June 24th 2010 *Rehearsals commence at Black Island Studios, London, United Kingdom*

Similar to the Coachella show, the night before the Glastonbury festival Gorillaz played an exclusive performance for Sub Division members at Black Island Studios in London. Only 40 Sub Division members could attend the gigs, winning tickets via a competition.

Murdoc: I don't remember what the competition was. They probably had to juggle bowling balls on their head or something.

2D: I remember. We had this major digital game of Hide and Seek. We'd taken pictures of ourselves and the live band and scattered them around the website. If you found them all you'd be entered into the competition.

Once more, to fans' disbelief, Murdoc, 2D, and Cyborg were nowhere to be found. What boring excuse will they come up with this time?

Murdoc: We actually managed to sneak in with the live band this time. They had nothing to say when I showed up to the hotel with Cyborg holding a hand grenade….I didn't make it to rehearsals though, who needs to practise? Get the MD to shove the band into shape, I'm off buying rum and pirate hats for tomorrow.

June 25th 2010 *Gorillaz perform at the Glastonbury Festival, Pilton, United Kingdom*

Flags though were truly planted when the Gorillaz live band took to the stage and rolled out what was to be one of the largest collections of live collaborations ever to hit Glastonbury in a single melee….Mark E. Smith, Lou Reed, Bobby Womack, Snoop Dogg, Bootie Brown, Little Dragon, Shaun Ryder, De La Soul, Bashy and Kano, Rosie Wilson, The Hypnotic Brass, Syrian orchestras, and more. Much more. Under a backdrop of 60ft high visuals featuring the Gorillaz characters and Jamie Hewlett directed videos, the world was wowed once again. Talk spread around the crowd that the cartoon band would actually play the show this night, as fans reported seeing Murdoc by the live band's tour bus, with 2D and Cyborg Noodle strapped to a luggage rack.

ABOVE
Murdoc books Plastic Beach gigs

Murdoc: Needed the space for my spare strings.

However, once the live band came out on stage, again, no Gorillaz were to be seen. This time due to a suspiciously delicious slice of gingerbread cake.

The following is a list of tweets Murdoc posted in the minutes leading up to the Glastonbury show, as fans were able to witness the events of that night go from bad to worse.

9:57 PM: The Zero Hour approacheth: I can hear the support band warming up the audience for us. Think I might pop out front.

10:03 PM: Hang on. Got lost now. Which way's the Pyramid Stage? Left or right. I'll ask this policeman. He should know the way.

10:05 PM: .....Waste of time. Fake comedy copper. Although he was a very nice man. He's given me a big chunk of cake to keep me going.....

10:08 PM: Right. Totally lost now. Due on stage any moment and the cake is kicking in quite dramatically. Thought that was just gingerbread.

10:18 PM: WHERE AM I. I'm surroundeedee bbyy wizardsss…visions goonene all blutrry..... Nnot again….!

11:59 PM: LOST MY BLOODY PHONE. STUMBLED AROUND A FIELD FULL OF JUGGLERS WHILE MY BAND HEADLINED GLASTONBURY! FEEL SICK! HEAD HURTS LIKE DEATH.

12:00 AM: ALL IS LOST ONCE MORE…

12:01 AM: A black day for music, magic and Murdoc Niccals. Should have stayed on Plastic Beach. THIS is IMPOSSIBLE! Might as well finish off that cake.

Murdoc: We were so close that night….SO VERY CLOSE….at least Shakira was there in the audience…she wasn't kidding…her hips don't lie.

The Gorillaz Glastonbury festival show was broadcast live on BBC.

Following the Glastonbury festival, Murdoc ultimately decided to hang up his hat on his whole "murdering" the Gorillaz live band idea. Return to Plastic Beach with his head held high. A rare act of maturity from the sickly green-glowing bassist.

Murdoc: That's not at all how I saw it. Decided I'm better off doing the evil genius mastermind thing while others do the grunt work. If I can't get off this Plastic Beach island, I'll command the troops from here. Get my Gorillaz band to sail my tunes around the world. Basically, I'm the Brian Wilson of Gorillaz. Sitting with my feet in the sandpit while my Plastic Beach Boys go on tour! Still, could be worse…

SUB DIVISION

THE OFFICIAL GORILLAZ FANCLUB

WWW.GORILLAZ.COM

LIVE NATION

Meanwhile back in the real world, the live band continued their summer assault undeterred with a slurry of festivals and events.

July 1st 2010 *Roskilde Festival, Roskilde, Denmark.*

Murdoc: Well, we slayed them at Roskilde. I think we've steered the ship back to True North. Now, let's have a look at this map. Where next?

July 18th 2010 *Festival Internacional de Benicàssim, Benicàssim, Spain.*

Murdoc: Mmmmm-Spain's looking kinda hot and sizzling. Benicassim? Sounds like fun, I think I'll take the Sunday please. Look out, incoming Gorillaz!

July 20th 2010 *Byblos International Festival, Byblos, Lebanon.*

In late July, Gorillaz entered a terrain that no major western band had played until now, undertaking a rapturous performance at Beirut's Byblos Festival.

Murdoc: Gorillaz heading to Beirut! This I'm looking forward to. Slightly different to the Hull Adelphi. Or The Withered Hand in Stoke-on-Trent.

2D: It was nice to visit home again, I'd missed the… Uh… What's in Beirut?

Murdoc: Google says the fine Lebanese food.

2D: Yeah, that.

Murdoc: Well WE weren't exactly playing 2D. The Gorillaz concert at Byblos in Beirut. Biblical. Who but Gorillaz could bring their noise over here? A magical place and a privilege to play.

2D: For 'Clint Eastwood', they got this Syrian rapper, Eslam Jawaad, to do the rap. Who made so much of this happen for Gorillaz, it was his introduction that really pulled this whole event together and bought us over here.

Murdoc: اثنان دي سحب إصبعي.

July 25th 2010 *Citadel of Damascus, Damascus, Syria.*

Continuing this small tour of the middle east, Gorillaz made a historic appearance at the 11th century Citadel in Syria's Damascus City. The live band duly served up a consummate performance and hopefully paved a way for bands to perform in Syria in the future…

Murdoc: For this gig, I actually decided to take 2D and Cyborg Noodle with me to attend the show, clearly I know the live band still wasn't gonna let us on stage, but I wanted to at least be able to witness history in the making, with my music. Even if I wasn't gonna be up there playing it myself…but, that Citadel is a beautiful place for a concert, in fact that place was even used as a prison during the 80s, and I know a thing or two about that from my time in Mexico, but we won't go into that now…anyway, Gorillaz in Syria! Seismic, a real revelation, cause we were the first big western band to play over there, which is surprising really, i'm not really sure why that is but, oh well, maybe it'll change now.

2D: By virtue of being the first big western act to arrive in Damascus, I think hopefully that's the beginning of a dialogue, and that in itself is meaningful for Syria as a whole.

Murdoc: Although, I did hear a rumour that the model turned musician Sam Fox came over here in the 80s so y'know…People have asked me, why Syria especially? It's simply inspired by music, the same stuff that's always taken us right round the world so far, since we started this whole Gorillaz thing we've always taken sounds from around the globe. From New York hip-hop, to Jamaican dub, Cuban, Calypso, bits of African music. And we rolled it all together into one big rich sticky lump so our trip to Syria was a part of that really AND the pinnacle of our exploits so far I think. We worked with the national orchestra of Arabic music with the composer Essam Rafea on our Plastic Beach album. And since then they've played with us right round the world. So we've made sure that orchestral syrian sound has been represented in all of the concerts. And now that collaboration has brought us back to Syria! We've come full circle! It was an incredible event all around. It was static! Electric! You could just feel that this was a concert, an event, that really meant something to a lot of people. For a band like ours to come to Syria, something was about to happen that would make a change, and the feeling was mutual, among our Gorillaz clan, we were just as excited, if not more so! As much as Syria had never seen a band like Gorillaz, many of the members and collaborators have never been to or played in a place like Syria. Just a privilege to go and play there.

2D: We had a beautiful full moon for the evening, I don't think you can ask for more than that, can you?

Murdoc: This shouldn't be a one off gig, it should be the start, the beginning, of many many bands going there, and other Syrian musicians getting to play in other places around the world.

2D: After this is over, I would like tapes of this show to be sent to me through the post.

Murdoc: Tapes, really?

2D: Yeah! Tapes.

Murdoc: Through the post?

2D: Yeah.

Murdoc: That's very odd. I didn't think they made tapes anymore. They don't just email you a link or something?

2D: No. Tapes through the post. It's a Plastic Beach.

The overwhelming reception of these live gigs set off a new fire in Murdoc Niccals, and map out his next step on finally being able to perform.

Murdoc: I must say, even though I'm only on tour in spirit (or should that be spirits) this is all very addictive.....I'm thinking about stretching this out a bit…not to mention a beach break? Hello. Is that my booking agent? I'd like to play some concerts. D'you know anywhere that'd suit a massive band like Gorillaz?...Oh you do!

July 21st 2010 *Escape To Plastic Beach tour is announced*

Murdoc: EUROPE. AMERICA. AUSTRALIA. GORILLAZ. THE WORLD. IT'S ON.

In a surprising turn of events, it was announced Gorillaz would be embarking on their first ever world tour. Several countries back to back from October to December 2010.

Murdoc: How did this all come about you might ask? Well, I was finally able to strike a deal with Damon Albarn, I forgot what I gave up to him, ownership of something or whatever, I can't remember I was too drunk. BUT, what I do know is that the Gorillaz live band would finally, FINALLY, let me out on stage and play the music. AFTER ALL THIS TIME! FINALLY! Such a relief. We all made peace and whatnot, and it worked out dandy, y'know, water under the bridge. And so that was it, now it was time for Gorillaz to tour once more!

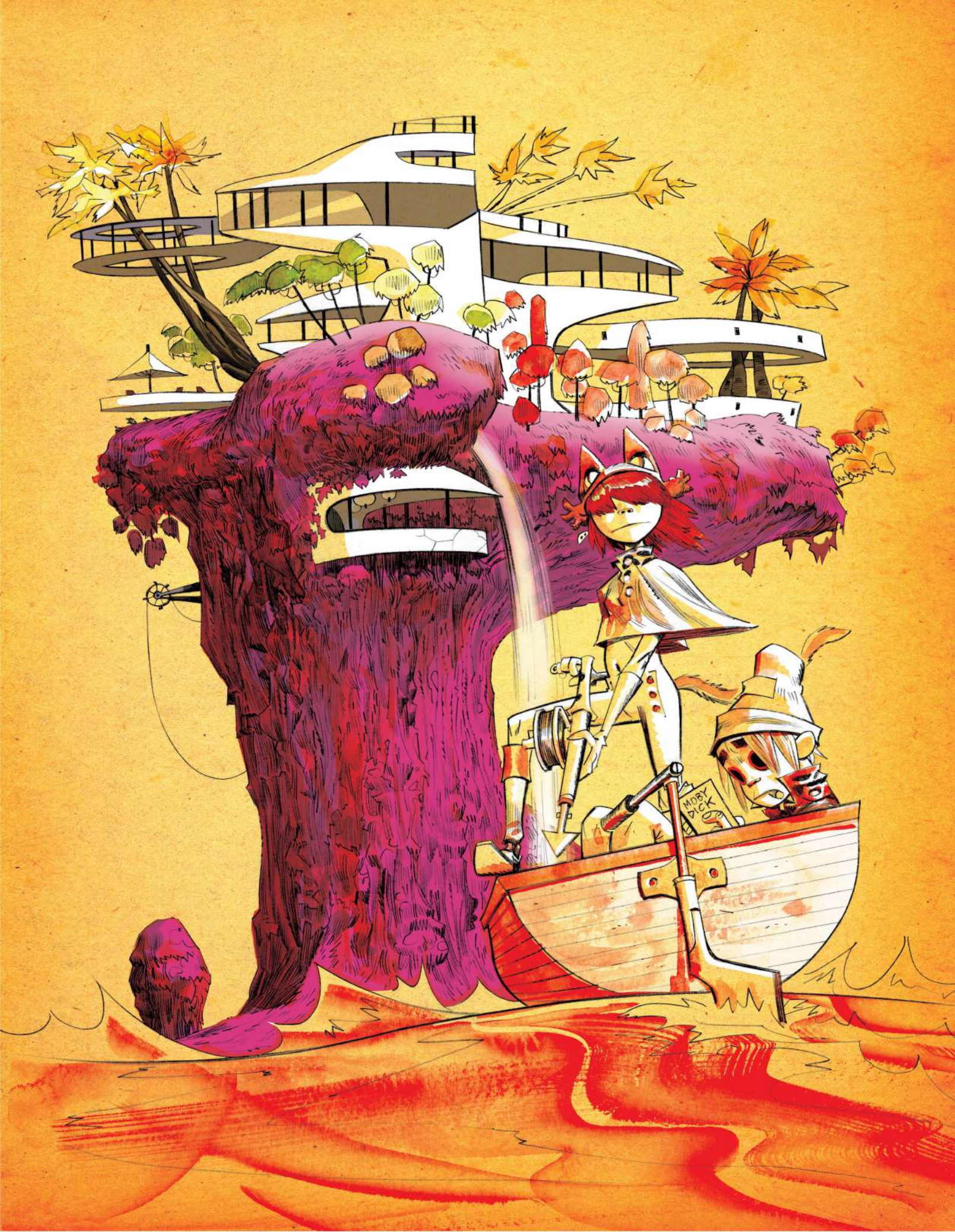
As the summer months continued, venues were booked, dates were announced (and cancelled), and Murdoc Niccals celebrated countless nights, finally believing that he had won this long lasting feud.

評してもらうのを待っているのに、きっとそれは
運にも見放され、罰を受ける定め
粉々になった気持ち、そう、その理由は身に
また海に飛び込める日が来るのかは分
またで
どうかは分からない。彼女はやれると言

GORILLAZ

GORILLAZ

1970
2010


MOBY DICK

Chapter 5
Across the Dark Seas

'Colourful sailors washed up on the shore
Fell upon bad times
Spider in the ditch she saw it all
Now she's trying to ride dance'

iTunes Session

April 20th 2010 *iTunes Sessions tracks are recorded in Apple Store, New York City.*

Following the Coachella show, Damon's tribute band travelled to New York City to record a live EP to be released on iTunes in promotion of their upcoming tour. The release features songs from the band's self-titled debut, Demon Days, and their newest entry, Plastic Beach.

Murdoc: After I was deported from Cali for not having a work visa we didn't really have a choice but to let big bad Damo and his Clash scraps lick the residue off our plates. Talk shows, in the papers, a live EP! They were everywhere! Grudges aside, I've gotta hand it to them, this is probably my favourite collection of Gorillaz covers done by a tribute band to date. These sessions remind me a lot of what we did for the Demon Detour, back in 2005, In-studio live recordings of our tracks. Great stuff.

A few months following the New York recording sessions, the suits over at iTunes sent one of their representatives over to Plastic Beach to interview both Murdoc and 2D for the EP release.

Murdoc: Really makes you wonder why they didn't just come over to the island and record us playing from here, we have a million dollar mansion and an in house studio! I bet it's all those publicists with their click baiting, making everyone think Damon's the star. I don't think so! He can hog the stage and the TV outings as much as he likes, but when it comes to claiming the medals, he needs to step aside.

The interview was conducted by a very unenthusiastic woman, with very little to say, on the patio of Plastic Beach.

Murdoc: Very little hands too.

Throughout the interview, there seemed to be heavy tension growing between the now caramelised Murdoc and his estranged singer 2D, as they each engaged in a fist fight, more than once.

Murdoc: Well, I admit, it's not plain sailing, I mean look at him. He's got, well, special needs. But, for me, music is the ultimate goal. Something that you have to rise above petty differences in order to achieve. You know, the greater good. And he does have a very special voice. Voice of an 'angle.'

2D: You can't do without me, simple as that. You'd still be living in a Winnebago in Stoke if I wasn't singing. Knocking off barmaids on a Friday night. If you were lucky.

Murdoc: And even if he is like dealing with some former mental case, I still think it's worth it, in the end. And I guess it helps that he's always looked up to me, you know, as a kind of father figure.

2D: In your dreams, Pedro.

Murdoc: And also, I understand it's not very gentlemanly to point out that our first guitarist, the one before Noodle, was a girl called Paula Cracker. She was 2D's girlfriend at the time, who I had a, uh, rather lovely altercation with in the toilets at Kong Studios. (Murdoc chuckling)

2D: RIGHT HAVE THAT!

(crashing, more glass breaking)

2D: NO, NO YOU CAN'T PULL THAT. OW! FOR THE LOVE OF, AH! HOO, HAA, HOO HAA. STOP IT, STOP IT! Get off!

(Murdoc hyperventilating)

Murdoc: Careful, CAREFUL!

(Table smashed, slapping sounds)

Murdoc: Sit back down, that's it, like a good boy. Let's finish this interview, shall we? Shh! Just breathe into this rag, yeah…deep breaths. Big gulps. Yeah…there we go. All better now. This section was shite, wasn't it? Shall we continue? I think it might be a good idea to direct the next section at me...er…not him.

October 26th 2010 *iTunes Session EP is released on iTunes*

Murdoc: Well? Where else was it gonna come out?

The EP charted at #154 on the US Billboard 200, and #25 on the US Billboard Digital Albums.

GORILLAZ

iTunes Session

Microsoft

GORILLAZ
WELCOME TO WWW.GORILLAZ.COM

GORILLAZ
WELCOME TO WWW.GORILLAZ.COM
2D

Who is the Evangelist?
Gorillaz & IE9 Character Design competition open!
ENTER NOW
GORILLAZ.COM/EVANGELIST

Beauty of the Web

September 15th 2010 *Gorillaz showcase Microsoft's 'Beauty of the Web' for the launch of Internet Explorer 9's Beta.*

Today Gorillaz and Microsoft have announced a partnership to celebrate the Beta launch of its Windows Internet Explorer 9 browser. Internet Explorer 9 Beta is designed to use the power of a computer's hardware to radically improve people's online experiences. At the same time, Internet Explorer 9 Beta reads special web design code enabling it to increase the speed, look and performance of websites. With a pioneering reputation for both online creativity and music, Gorillaz have partnered with Microsoft to develop an online experience for fans that showcases the potential of the Web when viewed through Internet Explorer 9 Beta.

Murdoc: Big Jobs over at Microsoft dropped me an email one day proposing we teamed up on this little venture, which was quite funny because I didn't realise he had my email. I was up for it. I mean I didn't have anything else happening that Wednesday. I had the hunchbacks over at Zombie Flesh Eaters optimise the site for IE9 to take advantage of some great new integration features with Windows 7. Fans can now drag the Gorillaz favicon to their taskbar and access it like an app. Right-clicking on the Gorillaz icon in the taskbar provides access to site features including News, the G Player and even access to my island! Gorillaz fans can even personalise this list by clicking the star to save any page. All powered by HTML5! My Club Room was even turned into an interactive space. If you hop on, I'll even talk you through it as you zoom up to the gallery wall and listen to tracks! Gorillaz.com is the online home of the world's greatest band, and we have a reputation to uphold in the field of consistently pushing the boundaries of technology and innovation. Our website is like the ultimate destination for music, video and artwork. All presented within a framework of games, messageboards, events and information, you get the picture. Was that alright? Don't think I overdid it, did you? I just wanted to say, like, it's like a wizards portal, like a new magical realm, mmh…nice. Maybe some of the more technical stuff can be explained by these lot.

Mike O'Soft: Good morning, Murdoc.

Murdoc: Ugh, geek number one! Talk, nerd!

Mike: Okay, what's happening there is an example of HTML5 animation. 'Tis considerably faster, as the operating system utilises the computer's own graphics card. You can see quite clearly how smoothly it all runs. It's like digital liquid, binary magma poured straight into the cerebral cortex!

Murdoc: I. Hate. You.

Mike: Professional grade model HTML5 support that is built on top of modern hardware through Windows. This is like the invention of the shoehorn!

001110011: New HTML5 features include support for video and audio elements, enabling video and audio without the need for a plugin.

Mike: Um, so yeah, it works across all HTML5 browsers, so you only need to develop it once, which gives us more time to develop more cutting-edge technology!

001110011: That's the magic for IE9 for you!

Murdoc: *mocking* That's the magic for IE9 for you. Bleh!

ABOVE
"Oh yeah, another one of my many part-time jobs"
MURDOC NICCALS

001110011: Nothing in my life works outside of the screen

ThorSlayer76: Well, I only got into web programming for all the chicks after the show!

(All 3 webmasters chuckle)

001110011: Chicks after the show.

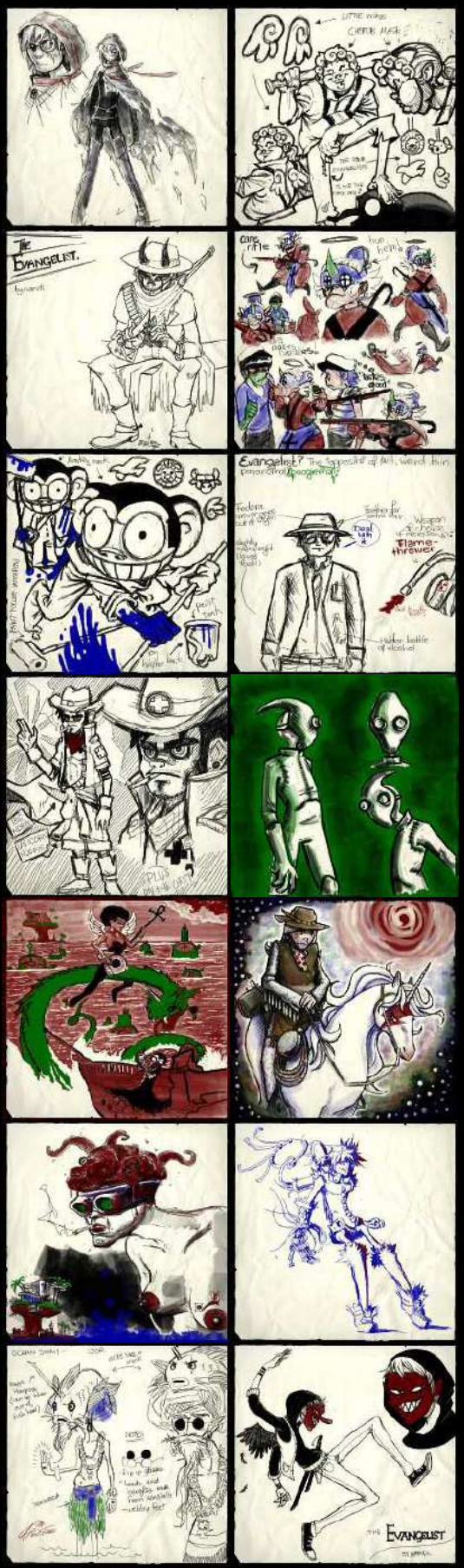
Murdoc: SILENCE! BEGONE!

The team over at Microsoft decided to send over a camera crew to receive a tour of Plastic Beach from Murdoc, and to promote the IE9 beta of the Gorillaz website. While Murdoc was giving the tour of the island, a shadowed entity once more graced the fat camera lenses.

Murdoc: Who's that? In the booth? It's the Boogieman! Ohhh! He's come for my soul, I gave that away years ago! Where's the evangelist? Where's an evangelist when you need one?

November 2nd 2010 *Gorillaz announce the Evangelist competition*

Murdoc: IE9 was great, but you'd be a fool if you thought I was only partnering up with Microsoft because I liked their shiny new engine. Back when I arrived at Plastic Beach and found the book, I read a section from chapter 12 detailing a creature of the ocean, an ancient being and protector of our history, sent by a higher force that neither you or me could possibly comprehend. The Evangelist! Basically this gender-fluid embodiment of everything great in life, total polar opposite to the Boogieman. Bingo, that's gonna be my saviour! Only problem was, I didn't know anything about the Evangelist other than that they were the yin to the Boogieman's yang. How do you go about contacting some godly shining angel spirit? So I started doing some digging using my newly installed Internet Explorer 9 applicant. Sea monsters, H.P. Lovecraft, the Loch Ness monster. All dead ends. To be fair, I did only spend about thirty minutes researching, our broadband is shocking. As a last ditch effort I turned to our adoring fans once more, and bestowed them with the task of finding this unearthly 'Evangelist' on my behalf to defeat the Boogiman and have those underworld bastards off my back once and for all.



Using a design app optimised for IE9's Beta, fans could work as composite artists for the indolent Nicclas and send in sketches of what they believe the creature looks like. Some web goblins relished the opportunity to try and throw Murdoc off the trail of his mysterious saviour, intentionally submitting fake descriptions of the Evangelist in an effort to bury the real form of the creature in Murdoc's inbox.

Murdoc: It's those Black Clouds I tell you! They're trying to trip me up, send me on a wild goose chase for unicorns and cowboys. I had ZFE set up this voting system on the site for fans to help eliminate fake entries sent in by those pesky pirates. Worked out great, who needs to spend hours researching and developing an algorithm when you've got endless waves of fans to do all the heavy lifting for you?

Over the course of two months, thousands of entries were received through Gorillaz.com and designated 'Evangelist' booths at 'Escape to Plastic Beach tour' venues. Hundreds were voted out, and finally, twelve finalists were picked to be the most likely description of the Evangelists appearance.

Murdoc: I shifted the remaining twelve entries over to Jamie Hewlett who then determined for me which one was the real Evangelist.

January 6th 2011 *Jamie Hewlett reveals the Evangelists appearance*

Thanks to Gorillaz.com user Jirouta, Jamie was quickly capable of tracking down the creature, using the submitted drawing as reference.

Murdoc: Alas! We knew what they looked like. Jamie managed to snap a photo of it while they were backstroking past the beach one day. Things from here were simple; if this thing was to ever turn up on my doorstep, I knew it'd be time to pack my bags and scurry off to my sub. The book says once the creature arrives at the island, them and their counterpart, the Boogieman, will battle it out for the fate of humanity. I tell you, that M.A.N book is a lot like a cheat manual, still, I'm not complaining.

Jirouta was thanked by Murdoc with a complimentary Gorillaz prize pack, including a signed print from Mr. Hewlett.

Murdoc: I would've signed it myself but my wrists were hurting after using my mouse to navigate this wonderful new IE9 beta, seriously, this thing's incredible! I can't see any other browser ever topping this.

ABOVE
The Evangelist

BELOW
Original design by winner Jirouta

Doncamatic: All Played Out

September 2010 *2D began work on his modified Korg minipop*

Murdoc: Plastic Beach had come and gone, and I wanted to do more. Not necessarily a whole nother record per say, but something. A single or two. I began writing up a few demos but I couldn't think straight because of one specific shart was making too much noise in his little underwater room.

Meanwhile, down in the depths of the island, 2D was busy constructing a piece of musical machinery.

2D: Massive Dick kept wanting to have a nip at me, I don't think Murdoc's been feeding him, so I had to make this thing to be sure he wouldn't eat me whole. Using a modified version of Korg's Disc Rotary Electric Auto Rhythm Machine Donca Matic DA-20, which I called the Donkatron for short, I could send out high range boomy frequencies to fend off that giant bug eyed fish. Two squinks and six squonks seemed to work best. The bass was so heavy it could make butter in a shake jar.

Murdoc: I wasn't thrilled about that to say the least, that whale is there for a reason D. Still, I did see musical potential in this little machine 2D was building. He always likes collecting these little pieces of garbage, it must've washed up on Plastic Beach.

2D: I used a few different things that were knocking about on the island. Some vuvuzelas Murdoc nicked from a vendor at Glastonbury, a couple old blown-out speakers we had in the studio. Half a dozen eggs, frying pan, mini ticker tape board, atari joystick.

Murdoc: A beautiful clump of shit. Sums up this whole place quite well I might add. That frequency he found, The squinks and the squawking or whatever, it sounded great. I couldn't let him keep it though, could I?

Following the acquisition, Murdoc sampled the Donkatrons unique whale-repelling beats. A few weeks later, a new artist washed up on the shores of Plastic Beach.

Murdoc: Daley was his name, nice chap from Manchester. I found him covered in oil and singing to a seagull…or was it an albatross? They were having a picnic, I remember that much. Anyway, I recognise golden pipes when I hear 'em so I popped a bag over his head, hosed the boy down and chucked him in the studio with Cyborg Noodle and her eight-track. I left them to it while I stepped outside for a Lucky Lung or three, and when I popped back in this is what they'd come up with. Am I a genius or what?

In a short time frame, Murdoc had recorded a new track titled 'Doncamatic', named in homage to the Korg machine that was used to produce the foundation of the song.

Murdoc: Oh Doncamatic! All bouncing beats, deep funk grooves and sumptuous soothing vocals, those horny horn noises, this track just makes you want to move. This was a delightful coda to our Plastic Beach album - I was looking for something to finish it off with a flourish after the whole thing had been said and done. I just missed squeezing this onto the original release!

ABOVE
2D in his room with the Doncatron

2D: I found out about Daley by watching him on YouTube, and he was just so cool. I think he's a bit of a star in the making. Not to sound too Simon Cowell.

Following the recording of the song, Murdoc kept Daley on the island, with more planned for the young Manchester singer.

Murdoc: I needed to get this track out as a single as soon as humanly possible, the pressure was on…but I wanted a video to accompany the track. I called up Jamie Hewlett and those Passionless Picture nerds to haul their keesters over here on the island with whatever recording equipment they could carry.

BELOW
Doncatron powering the minisub

Upon the arrival of Jamie Hewlett and Passion Pictures, Murdoc had the Donkatron installed inside his old rusty brown submarine in place of the busted engine.

Murdoc: The whole thing was powered by song! If Daley were to stop singing, even momentarily, the whole thing would've gone up in flames. How's that for motivation? Besides that one minor detail, this would be the only staged music video we recorded during the entirety of the promotional run of Plastic Beach. It felt nice to finally do a proper video again, instead of just putting out documentary footage with our songs overlapped.

Daley was pulled out to the shores, Murdoc and the production crew pitched him the idea, what he would be doing, and threw him into the submarine.

Murdoc: Poor lad was a little nervous, mainly because he didn't know how to drive a submarine, and also because this was his first proper promo piece. I gave him a few pointers, seeing as though I've starred front and centre in some of the most viewed music videos in the world, before closing the hatchet, kicking the sub, and sending him off to sea. Jamie yelled 'ACTION!' and I sat back with a beer in my hand, ready to watch the magic commence.

The video opens with Daley in a one man submarine, deep below the ocean, as he begins to sing. Passing by fish, stingrays, and the Superfast Jellyfish.

Murdoc: Y'know I have to say, for an album that had this aquatic influence, I feel as though this video captures the oceanic life the best out of any of the videos we've put out for Plastic Beach. There's no guns, car chases, boogiemen, ghosts. Just the beautiful life of the sea. Coral reefs, schools of fish, just the amazing reality of nature.

As Daley continues his navigation, he begins receiving a transmission from none other than 2D, who's broadcasting from his underwater room on Plastic Beach, singing his vocals of the song.

Murdoc: We planned on having 2D in the submarine with Daley, but the budget had dried up and I couldn't afford anymore chloroform.

Continuing his expedition, Daley encounters a great white shark which attempts to take a chomp out of the submarine.

Murdoc: That was actually the only unscripted part of the whole video, this shark came out of nowhere and tried to eat Daley whole! I'm surprised though, he kept his composure and kept singing, without messing up anything! That's when I knew this kid had some real potential.

Daley then comes across an abandoned sunken ship, long lost to time, as sea life has slowly inhabited the remains.

ABOVE
Thirteen. Doncamatic.
"Who's that even?"
SOMEONE

Murdoc: Christ…how deep did he go?

Finally, Daley passes the panoramic room of Plastic Beach as he slowly ascends to the surface to be greeted by the plastic island against a beautiful sunset.

Murdoc: After that Passion Pictures had a few additional shots here and there redone on a greenscreen in LA during the Plastic Beach tour. A bit pointless really, they look the same to me, apparently it was just to add an extra layer of polish to the whole thing.

And with that the Doncamatic video was complete! Another addition to Gorillaz grand filmography. Not long after the recording of the video, all of the collaborators on Plastic Beach showed up! The time had come for the band to finally leave the island and tour the whole world in their pirate ship. As the band, collaborators, and Jamie's camera crew prepared to head out, a dark feeling crept down Niccals' crooked spine as he stood atop his palace. Something was coming….and it wasn't going to end well.

October 5th 2010 *Doncamatic premieres on Zane Lowe's Radio One show.*

2D: I think a couple fans were a bit upset that they got this single instead of Rhinestone Eyes.

Murdoc: So? What were we supposed to do? It's not our fault we have such a naff label that cut all our funding.

2D: Er, actually…it is sorta your fault-

Murdoc: Quiet you.

November 15th 2010 *Doncamatic music video premieres on MySpace*

Upon release, the video received lukewarm reception from fans, however, it did receive an abundance of views and was generally claimed as a moderate success.

Murdoc: 2D…can you grab that towel? There's a bit of water on the floor.

November 21st 2010 *Doncamatic single is released*

The single was released via digital download, with a physical release following the next day. It charted at No.37 in the UK Charts.

Murdoc: This one was the most successful single we put out in 2010, so I suppose EMI weren't 100% wrong to change our plans…

DONC!

The Obligatory Awards Section

September 7th 2010 *Gorillaz win GQ's Band Of The Year*

September 7th marked the first date in another long line of nominations flooding the Gorillaz already packed yearly schedule. The first of which being GQ's annual Band Of The Year award. Unsurprisingly, Murdoc did not collect his award himself. It was in fact accepted on his behalf, yet again, by Damon Albarn and his cohort Jamie Hewlett.

Murdoc: I know what you're thinking, but there's a perfectly logical explanation as to why this happened…again.

2D: A while back we were invited over to Milan for two nights by some bloke called Giorgio Armani. I'd never heard of the feller but he wanted us to attend his invite-only nightclub in Prive.

Murdoc: Couldn't say I knew who the ol' geezer was either, if I'm being honest I thought we'd been invited to one of those lavish sex clubs, like Killing Kittens, which I was actually invited to the launch of back in 2005.

2D: Isn't that place for female pleasure?

Murdoc: Believe me boyo, the pleasure was all mine.

2D visibly shudders in despair.

Murdoc: Turns out it wasn't a swingers club, it was just…a club! A few drinks were spilled and numbers were exchanged. Ended up meeting this Armani for a meeting at around 9am the next day.

2D: If you know anything about Murdoc, and you probably should by this point, he's never to be woken up before 5pm. Ever.

Murdoc: Turns out he's some kind of fashion designer or something, wanted us on board for a denim ad campaign. Now I want you to take a minute to recall any point where you've ever seen ME. IN DENIM.

2D: What are you talking about? You used to wear denim all the time when we first met.

Murdoc: Yeah, but that doesn't count. That was before the big bucks came rolling in. It's money that makes a man, you know?

2D: Oh, right.

Murdoc: So I sat this old fart down and said "listen mate: the only people in England wearing your jeans are football hooligans." Now I may…(pause) I MAY, mind you have had a bit too much to drink. And…I was still drunk enough to think I spoke Italian.

2D: Dear lord.

Murdoc: I said something along the lines of "No, I don't need translation, I understand what Giorgio is saying" and I could perfectly guv honestly. I kept contradicting him and he got fed up with me, shouted "Scusi! Shhh!" whatever that means.

2D: Excuse me.

Murdoc: Excuse yourself, I'm bloody talking here.

2D: No 'Excuse me', 'Scusi'. He was calling you rude.

Murdoc: You speak Italian?

2D: Apparently.

Unsurprisingly, Murdoc lost the opportunity for a Denim tie-in campaign and hadn't seen Giorgio since - until they met again at the GQ Men Of The Year awards.

Murdoc: I'll admit when I've been bested, I'm a decent man like that you see. So I went through the entrance with Big D and little J, had a few pictures snapped for the GQ mag (note the comically large bowtie I had custom tailored specifically for my acceptance speech, it spun around and shot rum thirty feet across the room and everything!), bolted it to the open bar, drank too quickly, headed to the toilets, had a quick wah wah with Sir Paul Mccartney who just happened to be in there for some reason or another. Next thing I knew. Well…I got sucker-punched mate, square in the abdomen, surprised my eyeballs didn't pop out of there sockets, he packs a wallop for a seventy year old bloke that Armani I'll tell you that much, built like a fucking gorilla. I was just left there on the men's floor flailing around like a kipper. Damon and Jamie saw the whole thing happen, they were bloody mortified, and Damon being the cowardly suck-up he really is, ran off prancing like a little girl, probably worried he'd lose another tooth. Needless to say I wasn't exactly in any kind of state to collect my award, had to send dumb and dumber up instead.

Upon arriving at the stage to collect Murdoc's award Damon Albarn said simply:

Damon Albarn: All I'd like to say is to apologise to Giorgio Armani for my appalling behaviour last time we met each other.

Jamie quickly echoed this apology before the pair sheepishly returned to their table.

Murdoc: It seems like them playing ball got them both back in the good books, the three of them had a picture snapped together later that day. I wasn't invited to be in that one. C**ts.

September 12th 2010 *Gorillaz attend the MTV VMAs*

Four days later saw Gorillaz attending the MTV VMAs. Stylo was nominated for 'Breakthrough Video' of the year for its fast paced action packed explosive slam dunk onto the screens of music stations internationally, or that would've been the case if it wasn't for the single tanking in sales. Stylo went head-to-head with the likes of 'Strawberry Swing' by Coldplay, 'Symphonies' by Dan Black, and finally 'Tighten Up' by The Black Keys, who pulled the rug beneath everyone's feet with their shaky filmed play park loitering short.

Murdoc: What is this? This is like an advert for healthcare.

2D: Yeah, I don't like this, it's making me uncomfortable. These are just kids, mate.

Murdoc: Stylo seriously lost to this? MTV decided that kids lip syncing and beating each other up in a playground topped a high speed car chase in the Californian desert with Bruce Willis that put the Fast and Furious films to shame? Christ. That wasn't a 'breakthrough video', you'd see that on any street corner of Middlesbrough.

2D: Why are these middle aged men just watching that kid get beat up?

Murdoc: This is just painful! YOU CAN SEE THE AMERICAN FLAG MATE GOOD GOD.

September 30th 2010 *Gorillaz attend the BT Digital Awards*

The BT Digital Awards would end up being one of the biggest award ceremonies in store for Gorillaz during the year, with five nominations in three different categories.

Murdoc: Yeah we were up for Artist Of The Year, Best Music App, and Best Artist Promotion. Mind you we had two nominations in each of those last two categories. These BT Digital Awards people were all over us.

The first award the band won during the evening was Best Artist Promotion for their Escape To Plastic Beach Game.

2D: Well…it ain't a Webby, but it's something.

The second award the band won during the evening was for Artist Of The Year.

Murdoc: A second award!? I thought we were done, I just popped off for a quick forest, oh me seam's gone again. Anyway artist of the year, I've been called many things over the years but I think that one's probably the closest. So thanks to all the Zombie Flesh Eaters, 13, sealers, EMI, the RMPs, and all the collaborators who've sailed with us on Plastic Beach so far. And mostly, thanks to all the Gorillaz fans out there. We're coming to meet you, we're going out on a world tour!

October 12th 2010 *Gorillaz win 'Best Animation' award for 'On Melancholy Hill' at UK Music Video Awards.*

Some of the final award activities for the band as the year wrapped up included nominations for Q Awards, MTV EMAs, Grammys…

Murdoc: All the usual tosh.

The Battle of Rhinestone Eyes

Following the Doncamatic video shoot, Murdoc prepared for what could be the end of his regime over Plastic Beach.

Murdoc: I got this bad feeling. I had it before when we were in California with Bobby, and then again when we were on our way back to Plastic Beach with the collaborators. That's usually our cue to start filming. I look up, and I see him…the Boogieman! ARGH!

Murdoc immediately activated Cyborg and stormed his way to the roof.

Murdoc: Wait…before we dive into this, we should probably address the elephant in the room.

2D: What elephant?

Murdoc: Why the video isn't finished, you dim-witted lobotomised little twirp.

2D: It isn't? Why are we talking about it then? Shouldn't we wait until after?

Murdoc: It's not going to be finished, well, not by us at least. As we were wrapping up Melancholy Hill, EMI sort of…well, they pulled the plug on us didn't they? Refused to give me another penny. I suppose I played my hand too early with Stylo and ticked them off. They kept sending me emails yammering on about how I'm in 'breach of contract' and 'over budget' and all that tosh. I hastily sent them to my spam folder whenever they came through as a quick alibi for not paying up. Figured I could leave it at that. Apparently as Passion Pictures were setting up the filming equipment for the shoot, this huge ship turned up on my doorstep: the Battleship Ringo, EMI's first line of international defence against artists in breach of contract. They started interrogating the crew on where I was! Couldn't find me though… I was nice and cosy behind my bookshelf watching the whole thing play out. So yeah, once they gave up looking for me they confiscated all of Jamie's filming equipment. Total nightmare! Said they wouldn't give it back until after my debts were paid off. When it came time to begin filming for the arrival of Russel & Noodle we were caught with our pants down. J. Weasel had to improvise and speed sketch everything that was happening at once. The man's hands are like lightning! It's a shame nobody thought to pull out their iphone and just film it that way. Still, there's certainly a unique charm to this one…one that screams 'we're broke'.

2D: It's like a little comic book of one of the worst days of my life.

The opening sketch shows Russel and Noodle on their way to the shores of Plastic Beach, with Noodle riding on the top of Russel's head as he eats a hammerhead shark.

Murdoc: Russ really needs to stop doing that… can't possibly keep blaming his weight problems on his thyroid after doing something like that.

We then see The Boogieman at the top of Plastic Beach, with Murdoc and Cyborg Noodle confronting him. Cyborg opens fire on the Boogieman as he takes cover behind Pazuzu. The Boogieman then jumps into the ocean, with 2D noticing him from the window in his room.

2D: I heard the impact of him hitting the water and figured it was Murdoc drunkenly falling off the balcony again. When I realised that it wasn't Murdoc my face just dropped. I'm never gonna know peace on this bleedin' island am I? At this point It's like living in a Jim Shaw fever dream!

Murdoc: Oh, that was a good reference. Nice one 2D. A bit ham-fisted but it landed.

2D: I've been saving that one for a while.

The Boogieman swims to the Glitter Freeze ship and then points to Murdoc, declaring war on his island. We then cut to what appears to be the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in a desert, while the Boogieman is left behind on a donkey. A mysterious man approaches Flatulence and holds out his hand in what appears to be the offering of a partnership. As the Boogieman stretches out his arm to shake and squeeze the stranger's hand, the man is revealed to be Murdoc.

2D: Wait I'm confused, I don't remember any of that happening. What's all this about?

Murdoc: Oh, this sequence… I'm going to have to give some context aren't I? These scenes are based on me meeting with the Boogieman for the first time. It was in Mexico after I'd busted out of prison and began my career as a gun-runner with a mate I made on the inside, Pablo. We added these mainly just as an excuse to tie in my history with the bastard to this weird 3-video long arc we've found ourselves locked into. So there it is, me making the deal that'd ultimately send me on this six-year long cockup. Was it worth it? Well, it made for an interesting plot.

BOOM!

The scene returns to present day with the Boogieman staring down a slimy grinning Niccals. Cyborg Noodle blows the front door off its hinges while hauling a complete arsenal of weaponry, surprising all of the collaborators residing on the beach. The Boogieman then summons his own army to attack Plastic Beach and…wait…is that the Gorillaz live band?

Murdoc: Oi! Damon! Paul! Thank Christ you guys are here, help me out would you?

Suddenly, two pirate jets fly over the ship and begin shooting at Murdoc and the island.

Murdoc: I recognised these pirate types from the footage of the M. Harriet bombing…I knew Noodle and Russel had to be close by with those lot on my tail.

As explosions take out the interior of Murdoc's study. Massive Dick storms the bottom of Plastic Beach, scaring the life out of 2D as he covers his face with the clown mask.

2D: I didn't have the Donkatron with me because Murdoc had already packed it up for the tour, so I was left defenceless against this massive…dick.

Murdoc: Good one.

Back outside, Cyborg and the collaborators are still taking cover from the pirate assault. As Cyborg reloads while hidden behind a tree, she begins to malfunction, staring down the collaborators as oil leaks from her eyes, nose, and mouth.

Murdoc: I bet that scared the pants off them! I doubt any of those lot would dare miss another tour date after something like that.

As Massive Dick continues to chomp away at 2D's underwater room, a giant hand grabs the tail of the aquatic beast. It's the humongous hip-hop hard man himself. Russel tosses the whale into the sky, hitting one of the pirate jets.

2D: That bloke bombing Murdoc ended up dead, yet the whale survived…brilliant.

Russel leans over the surface of the island, staring down at Cyborg and the collaborators. Cyborg freezes in amazement as Russel opens his mouth to reveal Noodle inside, safe and sound. Noodle takes off her mask, showing the scars around her right eye. With that, the Rhinestone Eyes storyboard was complete.

October 3rd 2010 *Rhinestone Eyes storyboard premieres at the first Escape To Plastic Beach tour date*

Murdoc: I know it seems a bit awkward that we left Noodle and Russel there on the island as me, 2D, Cyborg and the live band set sail for Bell Center, but we really did have to get going or else we would've missed our flight! I was thrilled to see Noodle and Russel again, seriously I was! But despite my joy I was under the impression that they weren't too happy to see me. I couldn't say why. I'm sure arson, gun-running, kidnappings and Cyborgs had nothing to do with it. Figured leaving them to get acquainted with the island was the best course of action in this situation… let them blow off some steam for a bit before we get them up on stage again. Then when I return from the tour we could discuss things maturely. Y'know...no fists involved.

ABOVE
Gorillaz set sail
"Yo-Ho! Yo-Ho!
A monkey's life for me!"
MURDOC NICCALS

October 4th 2010 *Rhinestone Eyes storyboard premieres on YouTube*

Murdoc: You'd think that was it. The end of an era, no more money, no cameras.

2D: No label.

Murdoc: Not for much longer I'm sure. But I wasn't having Gorillaz go down without a fight! I had Jamie release his sketches online in place of the video, and told 2D he had until the end of the year to cobble together a new album for us to throw out into the cosmos. There's still time to turn this ship around, baby!

2D: Are you mental? We got a tour to go on. How am I meant to do that?

Murdoc: Figure it out or this'll all be your fault. I can sue you, you know?

Rhinestone Eyes was initially intended to receive a full release as the fourth single from Plastic Beach, with copies of the physical single being sent to radio stations across the United States. However, just days after the copies were issued, the band made the decision to issue the non-album single 'Doncamatic' instead. Despite this, Rhinestone Eyes still managed to chart in the US, charting at #34 on the US Alternative Airplay, #49 on the US Rock Digital Song Sales, and #16 on the Dance/Electronic Digital Song Sales.

The Recording of 'The Fall'

October 3rd 2010 *Gorillaz set sail for their Escape to Plastic Beach tour, 2D begins recording for The Fall*

From Montreal to Vancouver via Seattle, Texas and Toronto, over 31 days on their North American Tour during the autumn of 2010, Gorillaz recorded a musical diary. The result is a collection of 15 tracks, some with vocals, some without, some combined performances and some solo.

Murdoc: Well, this is curious...I don't remember recording this one at all. A whole album... and nothing. But it's got the Gorillaz name on it so I must have done it! Did I? Really? Yeah...I probably did. Did it on an iPad using all the music apps...Fatbooth, FaceAche, iBeer, InstantAlbum...all the great apps. "Great Appz"...

A large portion of The Fall was recorded in venue, during warm up sessions & while Murdoc and co. were suspiciously trapped within each location's dressing room. Was Murdoc's live band playing dirty? Or were there other forces at play, yet to reveal itself?

Murdoc: I don't know what happened there really. Uh, I mean, we went on that tour, right, arrived at each venue and sound checked every night, but then each and every dressing room in each and every venue the door was jammed. Jammed shut! So, I never made it to the stage. I just had to put up with listening to that sodding Gorillaz live tribute band play every night. I mean, y'know, they sounded good, really good. But, not a patch on what they would have been with me in the line-up, of course. (dry cough) So, yeah where were we? Oh yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah, The Fall. Gorillaz tour guide. I need more rum, mmh…

2D: Don't you think it was a bit suspicious that the live band were summoned to Plastic Beach when the Boogieman was trying to kill you?

Murdoc: What? No! I mean he is after my eternal soul but he was just doing us a favour, wasn't he?

2D: I dunno, them lot didn't seem very pleased to see you.

Murdoc: Be that as it may, we were all having fun on the boat trip over to the states though, weren't we?

2D: Paul battered you with the plank cos you wouldn't stop singing sea shanties.

Murdoc: Well maybe he just wasn't a fan of 'Blow The Man Down'.

2D: I'm just saying that the same people who hired security to stop you getting on stage, the same people who were summoned by the Boogieman, probably had something to do with us getting locked in the back at every gig.

Murdoc: Doubt it. I think you're just paranoid. Can we move on from this?

The album features a roster of noteworthy performances from the likes of Mick Jones, Jeff Wooton, Jesse Hackett, Paul Simonon, Mike Smith, James R Grippo, and Bobby Womack.

2D: Surprisingly they were all happy to lend a hand where they could, I guess it's just Murdoc they have a problem with. I also had Pharrell Williams of N.E.R.D on a track while we were in Houston, but it didn't really fit with the rest of the record so I ended up going with The Parish of Space Dust instead.

Murdoc: Pharrel Williams? That's an odd choice for The Fall. I can see why you cut it.

2D: Yeah…

Murdoc: ...Are you going to keep talking about how you made it then or should I go get Pharrell and ask him?

2D: Er…

Murdoc: Oh for the love of- Pharrell, can you get in here for a second mate?

Pharrell: We were working on a song together, we never finished it but it sounds so dope.

Murdoc: Insightful stuff. 2D?

2D: Oh right. It's, uh, actually something I did on the, uh, iPad initially. You didn't really bother, I was totally engrossed with this for like the whole North America leg.

Murdoc: I'm engrossed…with nothing…wish I was though.

2D: Alright, so this whole album I threw together in about a month. Murdoc insisted on me getting something done before the end of the year but since we were on tour my only option was this iPad that washed up on the island. I didn't just do it cos he told me to though, there's a lot of time on tours where I just end up staring at walls, so this was a fantastic way of doing it. Working in the day, whether it was in the hotel or in the venues, was a brilliant way of keeping myself busy.

Murdoc: And annoying the tits off of me.

2D: I wanted to try and do something different. The first Gorillaz album, our debut record, was more Russel's...like...lots of hip-hop, funk and Cuban dub stars. Demon Days right, came more from Noodle and her dark doomy demos that she made, and all of her contemplations on the world 'in a place of night'. Plastic Beach came out mainly from Murdoc's head, all of his mucky exploits and global collaborations and legendary mash-ups recorded on the Plastic Beach island in the middle of the ocean. Very rum and piratey. And this one, The Fall, is mostly just me...something more gentle and just...well...it's just me and an iPad really, mucking about...trying out some stuff. Just looking at America and then tapping on the screen...I'm not really concentrating too hard on it....So, right, each album got all of us on it somewhere, but each time it's...more of one of us than the others....Well, that's how I see it anyway. This time it's me.

Murdoc: Right…

2D: I guess it's my love-letter to America. I used to be very baffled by this place, and I guess I still am in some ways; America confuses me enormously. I was thinking of calling the album October originally, but figured since Murdoc already stole one of U2's live shows, I should probably stay away from nicking an album name also. Eventually settled on The Fall, fit with the time of year, and the overall feeling of where Gorillaz was going…it was Mark E. Smith who suggested it actually, although when I was asking for name ideas I think he just misheard me and thought I was asking what band he was from. When he first heard Plastic Beach he thought it was the Fall, his band I mean, not my album, so he thought our album was his album and that's why I ended up calling my album in tribute to his albums. You with me?

Murdoc: Uh, Right 2D, The Fall: sound of America.

2D: Okay, well no it's not sound of America, it's the sound I made in different places in America.

Murdoc: So it's the sound America makes…

2D: Uh, no it-it's just recorded in different cities, uh, different tour buses, uh, different dressing rooms. I was using apps on the iPad, testing 'em out and just messing around with them when-

Murdoc: What kinda apps?

2D: Well, loads of stuff, like Speak It! which is a voice generator. Soundythingie which is…a sound thingy. Keyboard apps like the Moog, uh, Filatron, S'lo Synth, M3000 X(H)D, bs-16i, Dub Siren Pro, Mugician, Electivire, Harmonizer-

Murdoc: Diji-booth, Timewaster, Nerd Synth, iGeek, You-Twat. And with these, you made a scrapbook album on America.

2D: Yeah, just started sketching out ideas, in each town that we played in. So, some of it was, uh, recorded in dressing rooms-

Murdoc: Oh yeah.

2D: Some-

Murdoc: Yeah, yeah right

2D: in the mountains, some in the back of the bus, going through all of the towns.

Murdoc: Yeah, right, yeah.

2D: The Fall, it's like each track is a little musical polaroid of another stop on the Gorillaz US tour, like a snapshot, y'know? It's not meant to be -a an

Murdoc: Mm, yeah.

2D: Too detailed, or anythin'. It's just an impression of where we were, or the mood I was in on that day, or y'know, just- just weather or something I saw. It's more like a scrapbook with some cuttings and sketches in-

Murdoc: Yeah right.

2D: A diary! Yeah, it's a tour diary, I mean, someone's said it's like a sketchbook full of doodles you'd find lying about on the pavement. Uh, I don't really know. It's just a record I made with some gadgets, init?

Murdoc: And, what did the doctors say about all this?

2D: Huh? Uh, what?-

Murdoc: Go on.

2D: I was just tryin' to say, I literally made it on the road. I didn't write it before, I didn't prepare it. I didn't have time to do anything really. I just did it day by day as a kind of diary of my experience in America. If I left it until the New Year to release it then the cynics out there would say, 'Oh well, it's been tampered with', but if I put it out now they'd know that I haven't done anything because I've been on tour ever since.

Murdoc: Cynics? Why do you care? We only needed this out the door to meet our quota.

The Fall was recorded on 2D's iPad over 32 days during the North American leg of the Escape to Plastic Beach World Tour and mixed and produced in England by Stephen Sedgwick. Other instruments that were used includes a qanun, a Korg vocoder, a ukulele, a microKORG, an Omnichord, a Minimoog Voyager, a melodica, a guitar, a piano and a Korg Monotron. The album was produced by Stephen Shedwig. Mastered by Geoff Pesche in November 2010, at Abbey Road Studios, London.

Murdoc: That was half bearable. Any final notes 2D?

2D: If Plastic Beach was an island, The Fall is its jetty. Just a nice bit of…er…wood sticking out of the side. It's a kind of an extension I've had built.

Murdoc: Freak. Shall we go back to discussing what I've been up to next?

2D: I haven't gone through the songs yet…

Murdoc: Alright, so I've actually got a funny story about this tour. Some fat naked bloke came up to me after one of the shows and said 'I didn't really like your concert, it was too loud.' I was thinking 'what're you on about, it was too loud?' Thought he was taking the piss, but the next day when I opened my emails I got this message, right? Said something like 'Dear Mister M. Niccals, we've grown concerned after the recent excessive noise played at our local venue, the cats won't stop crying, please consider repositioning your speakers to avoid any further kerfuffles.'

2D: Wot?

TO ED
LOVE, DAVID
THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Murdoc: Go on then 2D, say something. The world awaits with bated breath (yawns).

PHONER TO ARIZONA

The opening track of the album, a seemingly never ending tune full of sirens, distorted computer vocals, and dry drum beats. Out of the gate, we are already made aware of what kind of album this will be. The track was recorded in Montreal, Canada on October 3rd 2010, the night of the first Escape To Plastic Beach tour date.

2D: It's not ABOUT Arizona as you can imagine, we'd have to be much more to the west. And... (pause) south. Yeah. It's got a…er…well - it's like a train journey or a soundtrack to a train journey. It's a horror train actually, (snickers) going from one station to another in a sun scorched horrible descent into darkness, night time, and trouble. As the tour progressed and got messier and messier, this relentless train was still hurtling through the night…like, you know, smashing its ghostly way from town to town and city to city. An unstoppable juggernaut of hedonism, chaos and mayhem.

Murdoc: Available as a download kids, if you're still reading.

2D: Jamie Hewlett did a video to this track. It shows what I'm talkin' about a bit. It's up on our website, I think. It's definitely out there somewhere. So this track, it's a horror score I guess.

Murdoc: Mind your coco folks.

REVOLVING DOORS

Heading into the most successful track on the album, it was released as a double A-Side single along with 'Amarillo', making it the only single release off the record. The song was recorded in Boston, Massachusetts on October 5th 2010.

Murdoc: So what inspired this track then?

2D: I remember that I came up with it after being stuck in a revolving door in a motel in Boston. This happens to me from time to time.

Murdoc: Ah, yeah. Brilliant. Go on.

2D: Well this came from a thought, yeah, a feeling I had when I was away. As I was walkin' into a hotel, through the doors, the revolving doors, and the dislocation of being away from home. This image of this door permanently revolving. The endless repetition and the pointless rhythm of it all, I guess struck quite a melancholic image within me. You know, just the routine of -

Murdoc: - Can I stop you there? Thanks. You know who I really fancy at the moment? Kara Tointon from Eastenders the T.V. program, you seen that? I think she's really got something going for her, y'know. I think- what I'd like to do is get her on the island, this island here, and um, y'know. Do her. (immature chuckle) Y'know, think that would be great. (more chuckling) Anyway, sorry what- what were you saying?

2D: Anyway, I thought like, woah, a lot of stuff in life is like a revolving door, like erm...like with drugs, you know? It's just like..you are walking in and you have a sense of movement but you never actually get out, you move from London to Boston to play a gig, but all's the same, you get stuck and just spin and spin and get into the same thing over and over again. So I was watching these doors spinning round, just revolving gently 'n the feeling I got was quite -

Murdoc: You know what? You're really weird you are. I don't know what's going through your head half the time. I don't think you should talk anymore.

2D: You did ask.

HILLBILLY MAN

This track starts off with a calm and quiet melody, featuring only 2D's vocals and an acoustic guitar, before the second half of the song delves into a total frenzy, with percussion, synthesisers, and what you can hardly make out to be the growls of a grizzly bear. It was recorded on the 10th and 11th of October 2010 in Camden, New Jersey and Fairfax, Virginia.

2D: I am a hillbilly man myself, just like...English. I was smacked into a big city after growing up in a smaller, simpler place. I guess that Jersey kinda reminds me of that feeling, the town is like in the middle...there's something in the mentality, in the people. They are trying to help themselves in all that rush but they're just drowning, keep on getting into trouble. That's sorta the hillbilly lie, that somewhere else, somewhat different is either better or worse, they just create that false image of it all, and that bubble screams 'helping me helping me', but that stuff ain't helping, the cities ain't helping. It's just concrete and steel.

Murdoc: Go and mix me a drink. I'm gonna put you back in the cellar in a minute, Hillbilly man, strewth.

2D: I decided to sample the Donkatron machine I built for this one, I think it really helped that second half of the song.

DETROIT

The most upbeat and popish song off the album, this track was recorded in Detroit, Michigan on October 13th 2010.

Murdoc: Oh, so glad you asked about that track, you see that stroboscopic track is one of the better ones of The Fall, as it includes the great feature…me! I am that distant voice, that person who wants to communicate with you, but you're too drunk, too tired, that's all just some sort of blubbering-

2D: You were drunk and blubbering, actually.

Murdoc: Shut up, they got the point.

2D: I just let you say something into the microphone with a filter to make the funny voices, you know.

Murdoc: Tuckered me out.

SHY-TOWN

In this next track, it almost sounds like we are at the lobby of a NASA space station that was recently abandoned. The lights are still functioning, and so are a lot of the mechanics, but the building is completely void of human life, leaving the listener feeling more isolated than anywhere else on the record. This song was recorded in Chicago, Illinois on October 15th 2010.

2D: I really like that slang name of Chicago, Shy-Town. It's really fitting from what I recall, everyone is hiding in their little worlds, focused on and terrified by something that's at the same time, sort of the beauty of the city. I remember when we arrived there with Murdoc and the Cyborg, that's- that was actually the time I found out that she had those wires and stuff.

Murdoc: Took you long enough.

2D: I saw them when she started charging, she was plugged to the power and the whole process really terrified and fascinated me, that was my moment of...that...well, my shy moment. When I didn't dare to interrupt, I was amazed by the electricity reflecting around the room...also Murdoc had a gun. The flashing light made me see them red dots you get in your eyes, as you know my eyesight is not the best sort, so everything went kind of noir and blurry for me, passing cars on the street and the electricity seemed equally distant. Through that suggestion, I got dislocated. So that's how I see this track. Noir, dislocated, terrifying but curious.

Murdoc: They actually call it Chi-Town, I know your eyes are done but the fucks wrong with yer ears, lad?

At the end of the last track, we hear the sounds of an isolated highway, carrying the momentum of 'Shy-Town'. Before the listener can even process what they're hearing, we are put in the middle of this melancholy tune. This song was recorded in Chicago, Illinois on October 16th 2010.

2D: You know, I see The Fall as some sort of road album. Like you have road movies, right? This is a road album. And this song is a travel montage. You know, when you see the shots of the highways in the dark, the main character smoking with the window open, stops at the motels...and the fag ashes, bags, the trash, it all just flashes through that, it's left behind, it doesn't know where it's going...same as a kidnapped bloke who can just float... like them bags, ya know...waiting to see where the wind will drag them. So I guess it's what the song is about. That floating. A bit scary, but peaceful.

Murdoc: Oh you had to mention the kidnapping, didn't you? Get over it.

THE JOPLIN SPIDER

In the beginning of the song we can vaguely hear what appears to be Damon Albarn and his personal bodyguard, Darren "Smoggy" Evans, questioning how poisonous a spider bite can be. For some odd reason, Smoggy declares that spider's venom is extra venomous to primates.

Murdoc: Mmmm…thanks for the tip Smoggy.

This song was recorded in Joplin, Missouri on October 18th 2010.

2D: Oh that song is actually inspired by the moment someone drugged me heavily...

Murdoc: (Scoffs) Wonder who that was.

2D: The only thing I could focus on was that little spider. Something was happening, but all I could do was experience it through the spider. Her...his...or...their...I'm sorry, I don't want to misgender the spider, but I never managed to ask...that's why the song has both "he" and "she". Anyway, the spider's ditch was my radar, the vibrations of it seemed to move that chaos through me. Suddenly a gunshot fired and the spider was gone, someone just dragged me out, and so we went along the highway...yeah. And all that web, the little spider's world, it dissolved…

THE PARISH OF SPACE DUST

This emotional Texan ballad opens with the sound of FM radio chitter chatter. The track was recorded in Houston, Texas on October 19th 2010.

Murdoc: I've always wanted to be a little cowboy.

2D: I remember waking up in the car and being stroked by-

Murdoc: -Mick Jones?

2D: By the morning sun reflecting in the Houston river. The road dust flowing everywhere, it seems like in all that morning rush, with a broken radio playing in the background, I managed to catch some sorta cosmic landscape. Not a crazy one, a very, very simple one. And so the song is really simple, but quite reflecting that beautiful simplicity of that image I saw there. Nothing more to add, actually. Just this. The space dust.

THE SNAKE IN DALLAS

This monster of an instrumental track was recorded in Dallas, Texas on October 20th 2010.

2D: Things back in Dallas…I don't know if I can talk about those cos I'm pretty sure they weren't legal

Murdoc: They weren't.

2D: Human violence always reminded me of predatory snakes, you see, snakes do that 'hush hush' sounds, like, like, they hiss, and people also hiss and hush at victims of their violence, so like...violence in Dallas, Snake in Dallas. Yeah.

Murdoc: Where's Fifi? Anyway, squiggly little number there. Yeah, yeah I like it, it's very…well you know, using the music to conger pictures of animals and…oh forget it.

AMARILLO

Sharing the single spot with Revolving Doors, as mentioned earlier. This song was recorded in Amarillo, Texas on October 23rd 2010.

Murdoc: I think this may be another standout on this album actually. It's all in my bassline I think, you know it's the glue - the glue that really holds this track together. (Sharp inhale) This is nice though. Amarillo featuring Charlie Sheen on maracas I believe. He was quite high when we did this, baked off his head on 100%, pure uncut Charlie…Sheen.

2D: Well, that...that is a difficult one for me. It's sorta an anti-love song, you can say. It's about the lack of any human feeling, just deep shock, regret and overwhelming loneliness coming with it, maybe that's why I asked Murdoc to add some bass here...

The room falls silent. followed by Murdoc clearing his throat and adjusting himself on his leather arm chair.

2D: But also as a way of letting it all out. Yeah, consequences. And that was something that just struck me down, like really, really down. Playing at this place was just...weird, and confusing, I had to go outside, to the night and get a moment of clarity just not to go insane. And while, getting some… well, bad ideas in my head, I started humming and outta that humming came a song. And that's it. That's the song. It's trying not to go insane, sending yourself sort of a nursery rhyme. I-uh…

Murdoc: That's right! We had a bunch of famous collaborators again for this one. There was er…Boneo- Bono…in the corner watching with his big shoes and his shades on and What's-His-Face out of Pink Floyd just going bald on the sofa. The Blues Brothers popped in to do backing vocals. Billy Butlin, spoons and looking very relaxed. Adolf Hitler on vibes, nice. Princess Anne on zeusaphone, mmh. And introducing Liberace there on clarinet. Lord Snooty and his pals tap dancing. And in the grove with Harold on violin. And over there on the ukulele, Eric Clapton everyone, thank you Eric…

THE SPEAK-IT MOUNTAINS

This track is one of the more iPad heavy songs off the album, as we are bombarded by a dozen TTS bots, and someone attempting to unlock their iPod. This track was recorded in Denver, Colorado on October 24th 2010.

2D: So after a shock and clarity you come into a sort of a trance, focusing on small things. So I was just listening to the sound surrounding the mountains as we were passing by. Mostly heard the sounds of the car, but well, it's still different. The way it echoed seemed really universal to me, like the speech synthesiser was made just to let you deliver a clear, obstacle-less message.

Murdoc: Oh cmon, he was just playing with some generated voices, it's not that impressive.

2D: It starts with this gradual escalation of all these voices… noise. Eventually it just gets to the point of everything being too much information at once, you know. Seven. Shut up.

Murdoc: (mocking) You need to shut up. Like, I am not being, like, funny here. But, like, Please stop talking. Yeah?

ASPEN FOREST

One of the more peaceful and intimate songs off the record, this instrumental piano tune was recorded in Santa Fe, New Mexico on October 25th 2010, and in Vancouver, Canada on November 3rd 2010.

2D: This may be my favourite track from the album actually. It's simply about how beautiful the woods in Santa Fe are. Ever been there? They're just magical in a very simple way. And that song is like a hymn for those, just for the streams, recorded them with Mike Smith, the birds and the trees. It's a peaceful song, a very, very peaceful one. Just sorta...thought bout the surroundings and started blooping, clicking, playing, humming. All of this just sprung into me for that short minute, all the sadness was gone, I hadn't felt so good in such a long, long time. This song is the start of, what I like to call, the peace-part of the album. Plus got the bass from Simon... or Simonon, like Paul? I am sorry, I keep confusing them, the one that plays in The Good, The Bad & The Queen, anyway. And this just amazing, amazing, quanun from James R Grippo, brings so much to the song…

Murdoc: Ohhh…so Paul was the one stroking you?
Right, got it.

BOBBY IN PHOENIX

The only track on the album that features any guest vocals, it was recorded in Phoenix, Arizona on October 26th 2010.

Murdoc: Bobby Womack.

2D: Yes.

Murdoc: Dear old Bobby Womack.

2D: Yes.

Murdoc: Legend and soul pioneer, singer extraordinaire… what the hell did he wanna get mixed up with you for?

2D: I guess it wouldn't surprise you that I have such a sentiment for this one, Bobby was probably the only person that was ever nice to me. Ever since we first met back in California, when Murdoc was kidnapping him, we just clicked instantly, so to have him on my solo record was something else. He was actually interested in what was going on inside my head, unlike everyone else. One night we just sat by a small campfire and talked about our lives, about our music and our experiences in Phoenix. He thought of it as an extremely beautiful place. We sat for a while until I started playing, he eventually joined in singing and out of it came this song. I think while singing it he sort of...let go of all his worries. I just watched and enjoyed the moment, really. Added some synth the next day, it all mixed with the sounds of the campfire. I really miss that man, he was a great friend. I hope we get to play with him again someday.

Murdoc: I-...(pause) Yeah, he is lovely. I'm glad you two got on…kept you off my back at least, right?

CALIFORNIA AND THE SLIPPING OF THE SUN

The last proper song off the record. Similar to a few previous tracks on the album, the track starts with only 2D's vocals and acoustic guitar, with some little noises in the background, before it delves into a loud instrumental, featuring various patterns and themes, previously explored on the record. The snake rattles from 'The Snake In Dallas', the TTS voice from 'The Speak It Mountains', the weird sirens from 'Shy-Town', they're all back for this grand finale. This track was recorded on October 30th 2010 in Oakland, California.

2D: This is a goodbye song. Just the feeling of the stations, airports, whatever. Sitting on your bags and watching how the sun keeps on slipping. Recorded some people talking, you can hear Jamie Hewlett, Smoggy Evans, Tanyel Vahdettin, Mick Jones and some other bloke I can't remember. And the song is just me laying on those bags, falling asleep, getting into some twisted dreams about escapes and runs and...well. Yeah. You can call this an ending credits song, like some wild montage flashing before your eyes. Twirling, twirling and finally getting away.

Murdoc: Can we just stop this "escaping" and "getting away" shtick, it's starting to get old. I mean you did have fun in the end, didn't you?

2D: So yeah, that's it. That's The Fall. Sort of my solo act, I suppose. Oh wait, there's also...

SEATTLE YODEL

The final song off the record…uh…I actually don't know what to say about this one. It's just a toy pickle yodelling…. but…it was recorded in Seattle, Washington on November 2nd 2010…so that's something.

Murdoc: Yeah, what the hell is this track?

2D: I would like to know it myself. But I can't remember actually recording it. Nothing, just blackness. Took some painkillers outta your coat to get sum more sleep before heading back to Plastic Beach and -

Murdoc: - Brilliant, glad that's over and done with.

GORILLAZ

POG

GO

DigiTech

Chapter 6
The Final Curtain Call

'The song is not the same when we're
All played out, played out, all played out
They said the memories
All fade out, fade out, all fade out
Tell me did you feel that?'

Escape to Plastic Beach World Tour

North American Leg of Escape To Plastic Beach

Murdoc: Well we made it across the water! Gorillaz go Stateside! Touched down after a bumpy old flight, I think the pilot may have opened the cockpit window for a quick ciggie or something. And what's with the seating arrangements?! I was clearly told they'd booked me into one of those new reclining water-beds and I end up in cattle class with some of those irritating 'session' musicians...To top it off I think the turbulence had a terrible effect on one of my neighbour's bowels. The rumble was so violent it almost shook the plane out of the sky... My drink ended up on the back of the neck of the gonk sitting in front of me... Still, all good and ready to knock the socks of the US of A! Plastic Beach hits America! Anyway, as I said, we landed and decided to head over to the hotel to check out the bar. Grabbed the bags off the conveyor and headed out to the limo pickup only to see the Damon shutting the door and it speeding off! I swear he saw me, I had to flag down a cab and poor old Cyborg was really struggling carrying all those bags, unfortunately 2Ds hands were full with my duty free and I haven't got the frame for it. When I get my hands on him I'm going to throttle the twerp…

2D: Jamie Hewlett went on tour with the live band, he evacuated with us on the Glitter Freeze ship and just never went back to the UK, became an immigrant…I guess he was trying to keep on the low after everything that happened.

Murdoc: I don't know why they let him on tour with us…I mean what the hell was he supposed to do? Play the triangle?

2D: He actually helped us with the stage design, we got these huge lit up lights of our logo on the stage! We carried that huge thing around with us the entire tour.

Murdoc: Playing the triangle still beats whatever that is.

October 3rd 2010 *Bell Center, Montreal, Canada*
October 6th 2010 *Agganis Area, Boston, Massachusetts*
October 8th 2010 *Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York*
October 10th 2010 *Susquehanna Bank Center, Camden, New Jersey*
October 11th 2010 *Patriot Center, Fairfax, Virginia*
October 13th 2010 *Fox Theatre, Detroit, Michigan*
October 14th 2010 *Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Canada*
October 16th 2010 *UIC Pavilion, Chicago, Illinois*
October 17th 2010 *Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota*
October 19th 2010 *Toyota Center, Houston, Texas*
October 20th 2010 *Verizon Theatre, Dallas, Texas*
October 22nd 2010 *Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas*
October 24th 2010 *Wells Fargo Theatre, Denver, Colorado*
October 27th 2010 *Gibson Amphitheatere, Los Angeles, California*
October 28th 2010 *Viejas Arena, San Diego, California*
October 30th 2010 *Oracle Arena, Oakland, California*
November 2nd 2010 *KeyArena, Seattle, Washington*
November 3rd 2010 *Rogers Arena, Vancouver, Canada*

Murdoc: Oh yeah, and the shows.. forgot about them, the jet lag setting in, I was in the hotel bar for 2 days before I realised it was Sunday, or was it Wednesday…anyways, on the night of rehearsals for our first gig, I started a little video tour diary, recording the in's and out's of the Gorillaz live band, rehearsals, parties, plane trips…figured I would keep myself busy while 2D worked on his album.

During their first world tour, various support acts for the group included, We Are Wolves, N.E.R.D, Little Dragon, and De La Soul.

October 3rd 2010 *Bell Center, Montreal, Canada*

Murdoc: First night of the tour so I got some local crew member to go polish up my big logo letters. That's one L of a job... ermmm sorry…still, what a debut! We hit the ground running. A spectacular start! Big place too. The ceiling was so high my anablephobia kicked in. Had to bring myself back round with a couple of 'Cheeky Vimtos' and a quick lie down…but come stage time wow! An amazing Stateside 'Plastic Beach' opening. This bodes amazingly well!!! Next stop Boston...

October 6th 2010 *Agganis Area, Boston, Massachusetts*

Murdoc: After the explosion of our first night in Montreal, I wasn't sure we could ramp this gig up another notch. But mmmmm...we did...Boston....I knew this gig was going to be special. Electric! I had a feeling about this. Well....more than a feeling. And it was true! A seismic performance! I took a little video of the vast empty arena before we unleashed our hurricane, just to show you what a clean battlefield looks like. The Boston Enormodome and Gorillaz knocked this one out of the park! So this set us up quite nicely for our dinky little show at the Madison Square Garden Centre, just one quick stop off first. The David Letterman Show. Need a quick tune up and a brief gargle and I should be all set!

October 7th 2010 *Ed Sullivan Theater, New York City, New York*

Murdoc: So yeah, New York! NYC! The Big Apple! So while we were there warming up for Madison Square Gardens, I got my Gorillaz live demonstration band to drop by on Dave Letterman's show and run through a little rendition of Rhinestone Eyes. Hot stuff! Despite the fact that his studio's ice cold. That's the way he likes it apparently, so he don't sweat on TV or something! Very swish... I wrote some stuff down too that I got Dave's to say before the band went on…I only had to slip him $100 to do it. I thought someone like him would've charged a little more. Straight after Rhinestone Eyes, The live band did a 9-song attack on the Letterman audience culminating in a MASSIVE stage invasion during Clint Eastwood! We demolished the studio! Someone almost smashed my sitar, man! Kray-Zee Still, MSG is now in our sights and a two-hour set loaded right into the barrel! I feel a storm-a-brewing!! Mmmmm.

October 8th 2010 *Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York*

Murdoc: Ok. This is it. The Big ONE!! Friday Night. New York City. Madison Square Garden. All the bases are loaded!! But then again...so am I. I went into this one all tooled up...Cutlasses drawn, trumpets sounding...bass fully charged and at the ready. We've done some seismic events this year... Coachella...Glastonbury...Syria....all milestones in the Gorillaz golden glittering career. But this is it! The Garden. Home of the heavyweights, legendary boxers and er...Elton John. It was time for Gorillaz to annex New York. And yes, indeed, we slayed them. A full house with people hanging from the rafters. Up on their feet and going crazy! The roar was like a battlefield in full swing! Gorillaz played a full 2 hour set with Bobby Womack, Lou Reed, Bootie, De La, the Syrians, Little Dragon, The Hypnotics...the whole army in full effect. I can't believe no-one filmed it. History is missing a vital document! All I found was this footage that someone posted out into the vast empty chasms of the Interweb. Looks like someone had snuck on stage behind us. Lucky I didn't see them on the night or I would have chopped the mother down. Still, better than nothing I suppose...I was so thrilled I had a quick shower, changed into my spare black v-neck sweater, Cuban heels and lucky 'inverted cross' and then sped off to SPIN the NYC Table tennis club, for the Gorillaz aftershow, to go watch Damon Albarn play table-tennis. But obviously when I came to my senses, I snuck off to a proper party over at Q-Tip's Cotton Bud Club. Woke up in a skip in Greenwich Village 8 hours later, still clutching the bottle of Petrone Smiles had kindly lent me... Let's see what tomorrow brings!!....

The following morning, Murdoc posted on his blog on the Gorillaz website about some other misadventures he got up to away from the stage…er, the dressing room I suppose.

Murdoc: WOW! That was a big one! Took me all morning to recover. So, after the heart-stopping sensation that was Madison Square, I thought I'd take the opportunity on my day off to go get my gnarly black mop-top haircut. It was looking pretty shaggy, and I got something nasty stuck in it when I slept in that skip. I thought it'd be easy to get a trim in The Big Apple. I mean, how hard is it to do my style?. "Just make it look like the Beatles crossed with Keith Richards from the 60's mod era..."...Big mistake. So the upshot is I now look like a Styrofoam version of Kraftwerk. Went straight out and bought myself a new hat to cover it up...some stupid hipster trilby. It's all I could find since I lent my proper 'skull n' crossbones' cap to the Gorillaz live drummer...the swine. So next up a quick trip to my favourite skeleton and taxidermy store, Evolution, down on Spring Street. Great place to pick up some pricey dead stuff...the place is stuffed to the gills with all types of oddities and curios. So, that was New York, all bashed up Gorillaz-styleee. Nice. Next stop? A breezy Sunday afternoon stroll through Camden, New Jersey. Back on the bus for us lot now. That vehicle's taking on a life of its own. It looks like something out of Das Boot; a great big filthy submarine, dirty clothes everywhere, rubbish in the gangway and people sick with scurvy on the stinky bunks. And we've only really just begun...

October 10th 2010 *Susquehanna Bank Center, Camden, New Jersey*

Murdoc: Camden: The Big 'C'. Feeling frisky, New Jersey. So, right, as the band were getting their rubbish together in the soundcheck I did a quick runaround on stage. Me as Martin Scorsese! I told the band not to acknowledge the director (me!), keep it fly on the wall. But this lot are taking it too far. The swinehunds totally blanked me! Still, another blinder tonight. I thought we might lose pace after MSG, y'know...battle fatigue and all that. And Camden's a slightly smaller affray than The Garden. But the place went postal! Backflips in the aisles. They love Gorillaz in Camden....even on a sleepy Sunday! I think it's because of all the work we did here before, back in the day.... Turns out we'd played near here, in Philadelphia, before...back in 2002. I found this old gig poster hanging on the wall outside the dressing room… Doesn't look like Jamie's work though....

2D: The night of this show Murdoc got very drunk. He pointed at me then one of the security guards escorted me to his trailer. When I got inside, Murdoc gave me strawberries and told me about all the tragedies in his life, stopping only to cry or smoke a joint. Afterwards he said I was a good listener, and not like all the other girls. We hugged, exchanged numbers, and I left. He never called.

Murdoc: Ok. Gig done. All packed up and ready to roll…

October 27th 2010 *Gibson Amphitheatere, Los Angeles, California*

2D: This one was really fun, I could tell Damon was having a blast at this gig.

Murdoc: Yeah well, Paul didn't seem to have too much fun, poor lad got a bit too energetic and fell on his bum during 'Punk'.

European Leg of Escape To Plastic Beach

Murdoc: Rub-a-dub dub, my band's in a sub, heading it's way over to Dublin. 'Rillaz European mission starts today! Nice weather too...

November 11th 2010 *O2, Dublin, Ireland*
November 12th 2010 *M.E.N Arena, Manchester, United Kingdom*
November 14th & 16th 2010 *O2 Arena, London, United Kingdom*
November 15th 2010 *Heineken Music Hall, Amsterdam, Netherlands*
November 17th 2010 *NIA, Birmingham, United Kingdom*
November 18th 2010 *Brighton Centre, Brighton, United Kingdom*
November 21st 2010 *Velodrom, Berlin, Germany*
November 22nd & 23rd 2010 *Le Zénith, Paris, France*
November 24th 2010 *La Musicale, Paris, France*
November 25th 2010 *Lotto Arena, Antwerp, Belgium*

Murdoc: A lot of these gigs we were supposed to play back in September, but they all got delayed or cancelled one way or another. We were supposed to play in Glasgow, Newcastle, and Italy of all places. Yeah you heard me right! ITALY! We just didn't really seem to have the best luck during this time.

November 12th 2010 *M.E.N Arena, Manchester, United Kingdom*

Murdoc: I don't have much to say about a lot of these ones, by this point the whole 'being stuck in the dressing room' shtik was wearing a bit thin, I'll point out that we did have these big drawing booths set up at a lot of the European venues where people could submit their Evangelist related evidence, but it was mostly just filled with dirty napkins with doodles of Cowboys on, what's this new-found obsession with Cowboys all about?

2D: I remember Damon about halfway through the show bringing Jeff centre stage and talking about how he's a born and bred mank, so it must've been real nice for him to perform in his hometown's arena.

Murdoc: Who's Jeff?

November 24th 2010 *La Musicale, Paris, France*

Murdoc: AH! There you are, La Musicale! I just wanted to wish you all un tre bon anniversaire a La Musicale and say sorry that I couldn't be there in person, but y'know a man like me is always on the move. Tough Truffles! So, I've picked a rather marvellous group of musicians to perform instead. Toodle pip! And do enjoy this Gorillaz live band, au revoir La Musicale, au revoir!

2D: With Murdoc out of the picture for this one Damon, Jamie, Cass, and some of the other collaborators took centre stage during the interviews for the TV broadcast. Seems as though Jamie and that Emma girl really hit it off. Good for them.

Murdoc: I just…I just couldn't bear to see her again. Why Emma? Why did you have to break my heart? And for none other than my stylist…I thought we were friends J, what happened man? And now you're going off and being all buddy buddy with my frontman? I just can't take it anymore…I must have some Oxycodone, you got any?

2D: No, but at the end of the day, I did really enjoy seeing all the live band personnel covering the interviews…we don't usually see them doing much.

Murdoc: (Drunkenly) Ne me quitte pas…Il faut oublier. Tout peut s'oublier. Qui s'enfuit déjà. Oublier le temps. Des malentendus. Et le temps perdu. A savoir comment. Oublier ces heures. Qui tuaient parfois. A coups de pourquoi. Le coeur du bonheur. Ne me quitte pas.

Asian Leg of Escape To Plastic Beach

December 3rd 2010 *AsiaWorld Arena, Hong Kong*

Murdoc: We only did one show in Asia during the entire tour, the live band decided to whip out our 'D-Sides' track 'Hong Kong' for this one, which felt fitting considering we were playing in Hong Kong. We had Zeng Zhen come out and play the guzheng. That's my favourite geng. We previously had her come out on our Demon Days Live shows, so we figured we would give her a ring to come and play again…we actually had a lot of our Demon Days line up back for this tour now that I think about it… Neneh Cherry, Bootie Brown, De La Soul, MF DOOM.

Australian Leg of Escape To Plastic Beach

Murdoc: Australia was the last place left on our list. In all honesty the reaction we've had on this tour has just been sublime. As long as it continues like that we'll be very happy.

2D: I'd love to get on the beach and see a bit of the countryside. Given the chance I'd love to go out into the Outback.

December 6th 2010 *Burswood Dome, Perth, Australia*
December 8th 2010 *Adelaide Entertainment Centre, Adelaide, Australia*
December 11th 2010 *Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne, Australia*
December 16th 2010 *Sydney Entertainment Centre, Sydney, Australia*
December 19th 2010 *Brisbane Entertainment Centre, Brisbane, Australia*

Murdoc: We've just been holding onto the image that as soon as we landed in Australia it was going to be beautiful summer weather, Arthur, who looks after Bobby Womack, is convinced he controls the weather so I am going to have to have a talk to him today, I need an explanation as to why it's overcast.

2D: We went for a rather splendid lunch by the beach. We had steak and mussels and a nice bottle of white wine.

Murdoc: Yeah that was nice, but why was it so busy on a Monday? It's Monday. It's not summer holidays. What is everyone doing? Do you not work for a living here, for fucks sake. It's Monday morning. It wasn't even like it was just pensioners!

2D: And there was a nice seagull that came and kept us company.

Murdoc: Our seagulls on Plastic Beach are much more anti-social. They attack you. We have ASBO seagulls, like we have ASBO teenagers back in the UK. It's a country in terrible decline, the UK, I don't recommend Australians come over anymore. It really is beyond me why they turn up in their numbers, I mean thousands and thousands of them, to this miserable, grey, overcast, over-populated, dirty, depressed little island in the Northern Hemisphere.

2D: I thought you were talking about Plastic Beach.

Murdoc: Yeah.

2D: Uh… All we have to offer them is Walkabout pubs.

December 16th 2010 *Sydney Entertainment Centre, Sydney, Australia*

Murdoc: Not long before this gig, Paul Simonon checked into St. Vincent's Hospital because he wasn't feeling too well, though apparently nothing was wrong…my guess? He fell on his arse a bit too hard back in the states.

New Zealand leg of Escape To Plastic Beach

December 21st 2010 *Vector Arena, Auckland, New Zealand*

Murdoc: This would be a wonderful point to leave Gorillaz; This tour, with these people, is a one-off. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We'll never repeat this.

2D: Really?

Murdoc: Well, I don't know; we'll see how we feel later down the line, for now, I'm putting it back in the box for a while. Just putting it back on the shelf. Tonight will be our very last gig… I'd like to go out with a bang.

The Fall Released

December 20th 2010 *The Fall is announced*

2D: I needed to get this album done as soon as possible, Murdoc even announced the record right before we'd even finished the tour.

Murdoc: Well, we only had one more show.

December 22nd 2010 *Phoner To Arizona music video is released*

Murdoc: With the few clams I had left in my pocket, I was able to pay J. Dawgg to throw together a video using all the pictures and videos I took during our Plastic Beach tour. Figured it would've made a nice promo piece for 2D's dumb little drum machine sample pack.

2D: I actually like this video a lot, Jamie captured what I was trying to get with this track really well. A high speed horror train montage speeding through Arizona, mixed with all these tiny snapshots of the past two months of our lives. It perfectly matches the sound and atmosphere of The Fall.

2D: As simple as it is, I think this might be my favourite music video that we put out this year.

Murdoc: Cheap and lazy, fits you well mate.

2D: The only thing that's cheap around here is you after you done us both in with the last album, bellend.

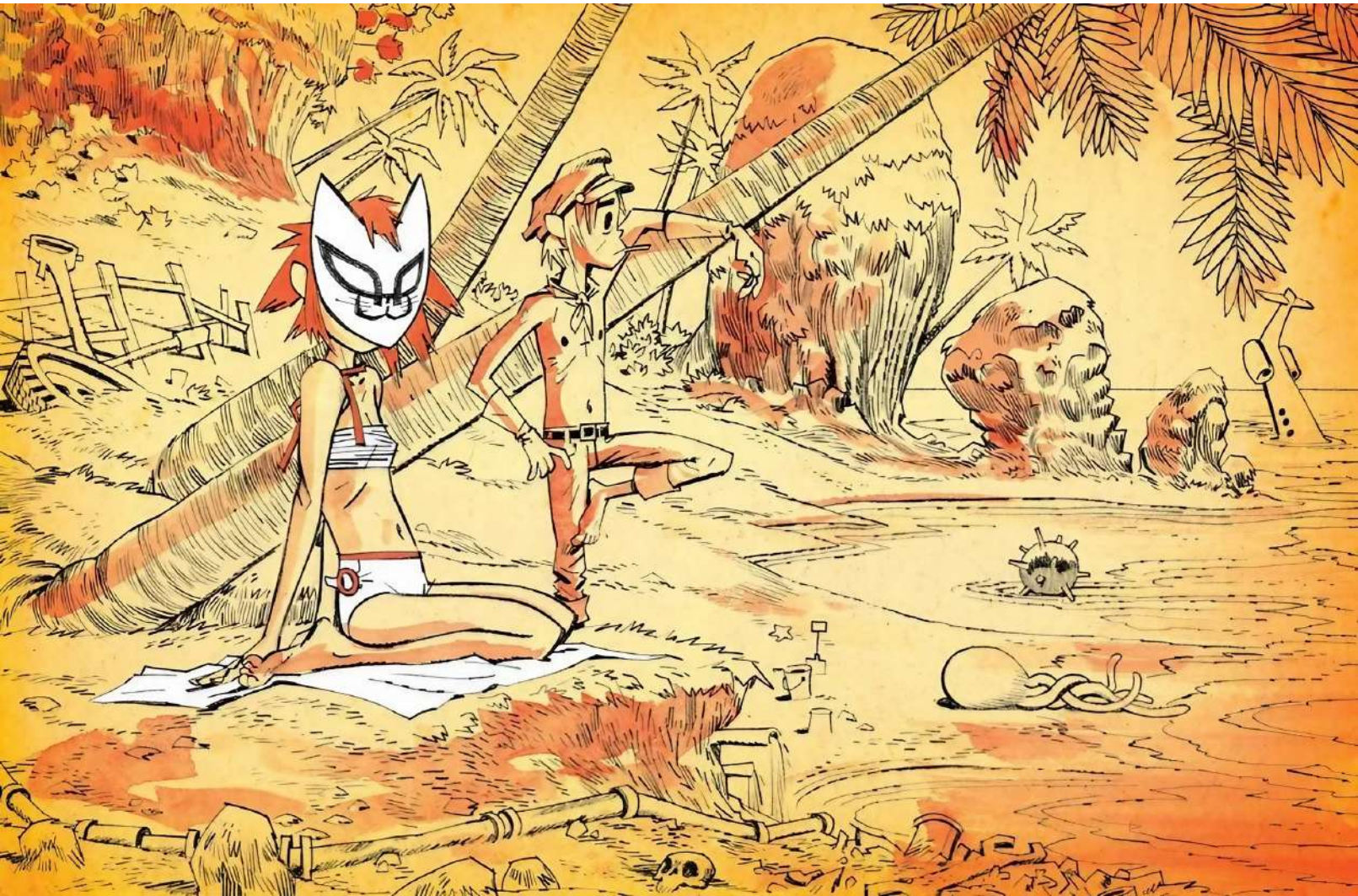
December 25th 2010 *The Fall is released exclusively for Sub-Division*

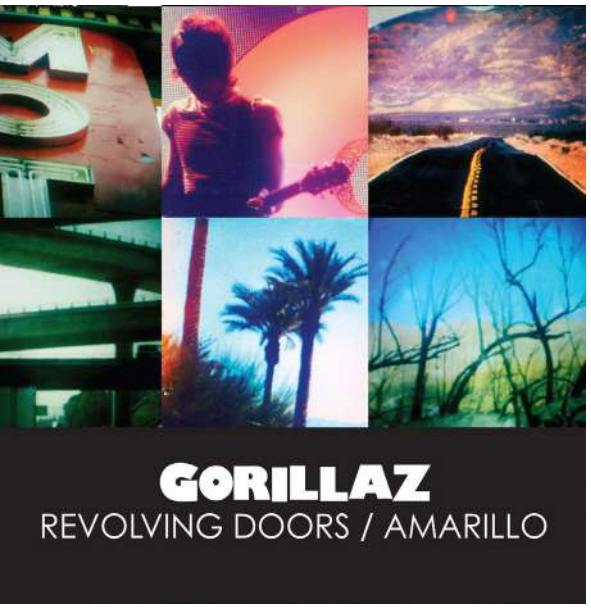
Murdoc: A little present in your Christmas stocking from yours truly.

2D: I wanted it to be a way of thanking everyone who supported us. I saw it as a chance to get the music out without all that paraphernalia and process.

Murdoc: Blimey, that's a big word.

Upon its initial release, critics praised the album's experimental qualities but felt that it lacked the feel of previous Gorillaz albums.





ABOVE
Revolving Doors / Amarillo
AA Single

Murdoc: Can't say I'm that surprised that 2D's album is considered the worst of the bunch. You thought I was taking the mick? Nope. I was right the whole time. He's totally hopeless.

2D: I guess listeners were expecting something a little deeper and more on par with what we've done before. I think those people are sort of missing the point of what this record is supposed to be. It's not cartoonish like our debut, and it doesn't have any complexities surrounding it like Plastic Beach. It's a nice simple break from all the chaos, an interlude in the story. Like finding a bench after running for miles on end.

March 14th 2011 *Revolving Doors/Amarillo double A-Side is released*

Murdoc: When the hell did we drop this? I swear I would've remembered putting this out.

The only single release from The Fall. As per the standard, the single did not chart anywhere in the US or the UK. Reaching #12 on the Japan Hot Overseas chart, #34 on the Mexico Ingles Airplay, and #1 on the Self-Indulgent Circle Jerk chart

Murdoc: It's a No. 1 hit on Point Nemo FM. Let's take a listen folks, yeah?

April 18th 2011 *The Fall is released*

NME, January 17th: "It's immediately clear that this is a profoundly different beast to the previous three albums... feels less like a talented middle-aged man and his sleb mates having a laugh and more like a cohesive album. So there aren't any retreads of 'DARE' or 'Clint Eastwood" but it is a stunning album from start to finish. We are treated to the lascivious Ohio Players / G-funk synth stylings of 'The Snake In Dallas' which sounds as if Dr Dre had been called in to produce The Go! Team. 'Amarillo' is a lachrymal ballad worthy of Blur in their pomp and 'The Joplin Spider' is aqua-crunk gone pop. Thankfully, Albarn has now announced that this album is to get a physical release this month, which is fitting given that this quiet but ambitious record is one of the best he's been associated with."

Murdoc: I can smell the burning again. Tell you what, just wake me when this bits over.

The Guardian, April 17th: Occasionally, The Fall reminds you what Albarn's vaulting self-belief is based on: moments where the no-prior-preparation method behind the album works, where you can hear a flash of early-hours inspiration pan out into a great song. The Joplin Spider sets his voice against a barrage of surprisingly fierce computerised noise. Amarillo offers a gorgeous, stately chord progression, Albarn's weary vocal weaving around steely synthesisers. The Parish of Space Dust shifts from the sonic cliche of snatches of familiar songs peering out from the sound of someone tuning a radio into one of Albarn's trademark melodies, languid and suffused with melancholy, pressed into the service of an improbable lyric about the beauty of Texas, over an ungainly waltz beat. It shouldn't work, but ultimately it does, which is pretty much The Fall all over. If, as rumours suggest, that's it for Gorillaz, it's certainly a slightly odd way to end things. It's a patchy and tangential album on which its author's greatness flickers intermittently rather than shines. That said, there's definitely greatness there: enough to make you fascinated as to what Albarn will do next, grand gesture or otherwise.

The Independent, April 17th: The Fall was sneak-released to fan-club members on Christmas Day, just nine months after Plastic Beach, but is only now getting a wider physical release to the slowcoaches of the general populace. If these gimmicky shenanigans mean that it falls down the cracks in the public consciousness it will be a real shame. Recorded on tour in North America late last year – The Fall is inevitably something of a travelogue, and no fewer than eight song titles contain US place names – the band's fourth album was created entirely on Albarn's iPad, and sees him fiddling around with every app he can get his fingertips on. They've eased up on the guest spots, but 'Bobby in Phoenix' features a gorgeous turn from Mr Womack. And though there's no smash hit leaping out, with its consistent unity of atmosphere, The Fall is the most cohesive Gorillaz album yet.

ABOVE
Advent Calendar
"It never snows on Plastic Beach"
MURDOC NICCALS

2D: I think this album was a good wake up call for me, it showed me that I've never really needed Murdoc to do something. My music's nothing without help along the way, but at least I know I don't need that div to do something interesting.

Murdoc: We've got the next Roger Daltrey here, haven't we D? You gonna leave us and start a solo career doing shite acoustic sets in your hometown until you cave in from all the pills you're choking down?

2D: It's more than you'll be doing after the nails in the coffin for us. You're nothing without other people doing all the work for you. But don't worry, I'll come visit you in rehab, even if it is just to drop off a few of my CDs.

Murdoc glares with dry yellow eyes, raising his fist to the now venomous Stu Pot, awaiting him to back down as he has countless times before. But for the first time in the almost decade-long lifetime of the pair, 2D stands his ground and doesn't flinch.

The Fall charted in various countries, peaking at number 12 on the UK Albums Chart, and number 24 on the US Billboard 200, selling 180,000 copies worldwide.

Murdoc: You know what? Wouldn't it have been funny if the album sold like, 10 million copies or something? Anyone else think that's funny? No? Whatever then, let's get a move on.

The Girl in the Cat Mask

As Noodle stepped out of Russels mouth the collaborators, Murdoc, Cyborg & 2D, stood in awe. After almost five years, the Gorillaz family was reunited once more.

Murdoc: Here they are, the 'Rillaz rescue team! Ok. Keep calm. Big swig. Quick fag.

Noodle pulls up a deck chair next to the duo and places her now shattered cat mask on the sand as Russel loiters on the shore.

Noodle: I've read your notes from Murdoc, I think it's about time I set the record straight. The boys have said enough.

Murdoc: A hello first would be nice.

2D: Hello!

Noodle: After the recording of the El manana video, I parachuted off the island, barely making it out alive. After I landed on the cliffside out of sight from the cameras I made my way back to Kong-

Murdoc: See? I knew she survived! Atta girl. Noodle's return is all tied up in the contract I signed with Beelzebub that shoe-horned Gorillaz up the charts in the first place. He was cocked off about some late payment of my eternal soul, or something stupid. He as well as anyone should know that these types of payments take time to come through.

Noodle slams the leg of her chair on Murdocs thick cuban boot.

Murdoc: YAOWWWWW!

Noodle: But once I arrived to collect my things I noticed a shadow not of my own, chasing me around the building. A demon with a long pointed nose and a black cape.

2D: That sounds terrifying! I hope I never meet him.

Murdoc: It's the Boogieman you stupid ponce, he just attacked the bloody island! How did you forget again?

Noodle: I was dragged down to Hell as insurance for Murdoc's soul-debts being overdue.

Murdoc: If I were to never return, She'd have been kept down there, tied to a rock that's being pushed up a hill for all eternity.

Noodle: Well that wasn't really what I was doing. I was forced into this band full of demons, which I think Beelzebub put together specifically as some sort of ironic punishment. In life I played guitar, in damnation I was forced to play guitar forever. The band was even called 'Noodle in Chainz'.

Murdoc: Good stuff, interesting cliffhanger, killer name. Then what?

Noodle: Well, with a tiny modicum of guilt and a sliver of honour, probably also because he wanted me to help make a third album, Murdoc came to my rescue by tricking my demon captors, Beelzebub and Malthus, into releasing me. We returned to Kong in tow, safe and sound.

Murdoc: Hold on, now I'm confused. I know I went to Hell and back to try and find you but I don't remember any of this.

Noodle: You stumbled in with a loose belt and wet jeans down to your ankles, blabbering about Courtney Love owing you for a twenty gauge.

Murdoc: Can we skim over this part sweetheart?

Noodle: These devils and demons weren't happy with Murdoc duping them for a third time, so I had to go into hiding.

Murdoc: How did I go about doing that?

Russel: Man this stuffs been dragged out for long enough, do we really need to go in depth for this?

Murdoc: You're absolutely right Russ, nobody in their right mind wants to hear about the time the infamous Murdoc Niccals, playboy millionaire and self proclaimed 'king of the world' PLAYED THE DEVIL HIMSELF.

2D: Can you tone it down? I wanna hear what she has to say.

Noodle: Thank you 2D. With my earnings from Demon Days I purchased a ship, the M. Harriet, which circled the world to keep me hidden. Until one day a ragtag group of Pirates found the ship.

Russel: That's when I stumbled across her.

Murdoc: Jesus Russ, you're sixty times your size! CAN YOU SPEAK A LITTLE LOUDER, PLEASE? It's not like I needed windows or anything.

Russel: Pipe down muds or you're gonna end up under my thumb.

Murdoc: Literally or figuratively?

Russel: What do you think?

Murdoc: If you insist… Of course it fell to muggings here, (turns to 2D) that's me, to go on some epic Odysseus type journey into the Underworld to try and rescue her.

Noodle: I am capable of looking after myself, but I was grateful for Murdoc risking his own safety to bring me back, we were both way in over our heads. He's not as bad as you'd think he is though, Murdoc really does care for us.

2D: You've gotta be jokin'. I just spent the last two years in this tossers bas-

Murdoc shoves his dirty green palm over Tusspots mouth.

Murdoc: Oh please, Noodle, you're making me blush, or is that the rum?

2D: Ger off me you dirty old minge!

Murdoc: Well, I suppose that's that. Sure we still have half the western underworld hot on our tail but…I mean, well, everyone's got their demons to battle. It's just that mine take on a more physical form and have names like "Alichino", "Lilith", "Baphomet" "Sidragasum", "Xitragupten" and so on….I guess that's what you get if you're born in a mental asylum named after a demon called Belphegor. Still I was never bored as a child. Yup…never bored. But hey, the gang's back, isn't that great, and I've got you two now to ward off these bastards. Don't I big feller, Ey?

December 22nd 2010 *2D, Murdoc and Cyborg return to Plastic Beach following the tour*

Murdoc: When we got back after our world tour, we saw that Noodle and Russel had done some housekeeping for us… Thank you very much for that.

ABOVE
Underwater room
"It's much nicer looking outward than in, but you'll have to take my word on that"
NOODLE

ABOVE
"Wouldn't it have been cool if that scarred? No?"
MURDOC NICCALS

Russel: So what have you been up to while you've been away, Muds?

Murdoc: Er…just y'know…hanging about with my best pal 2D… Isn't that right 2D?

2D: Sod off… SOD OFF.

Murdoc: See? He's a happy sailor now isn't he? Tours done and his albums ready to roll. What's not to be smiling about?

Noodle: He doesn't seem too pleased to me.

Russel: You are so on the edge, man. We're having a looooooooong conversation tonight. A really long one.

As the holidays rolled by, things seemed to be picking up for the band for the first time in, well… years! Noodle and Russel's presence as well as 2D's newly found spine brought a balance to the broken order of Gorillaz. Murdoc's dictatorship of Point Nemo and the consistent physical abuse directed towards 2D finally came to a close.

Murdoc: Hell hath no fury like a Russel scorned.

2D: It was such a relief to finally be reunited with Noodle and Russel again, things had been horrible for years, but when they came onto the island and set everything right, I was actually starting to look forward to each coming day again. The pirates had gone, Murdoc respected me more, Massive Dick was still missing…despite all this though, something was still off, none of us could really put our fingers on it. Maybe it was just the rollercoaster of events that occurred in each of our lives that led us to this point, or maybe that was the sort of stuff that binded us together in the first place. I'm not sure, but it definitely wasn't the same as when we started…

During the Escape To Plastic Beach tour, Noodle and Russel began to acquaint themselves with the plastic empire Murdoc had been living on for the last few years.

Noodle: Plastic Beach wasn't that bad for an island made out of garbage. It did smell pretty bad though, but it at least covered up Murdoc's unique odour. I moved into the little glass underwater room at the very bottom of the island, just below where 2D's room was. Murdoc initially just used the panoramic glass room for storage, I actually found a lot of my stuff from Kong packed up in there, so I decided to make it a space of my own. That room was such a relaxing place to be after the long and dangerous endeavour that was journeying to Plastic Beach. I even began meditating there once a day, it wasn't intentional, I just happened to find myself getting lost staring into the vast waters, but eventually it turned into a daily ritual of mine. That space has sort of become my mind palace. It was beautiful just watching all the marine life swim by. Strangely enough, with the pollution of the ocean all clumping together due to the currents of the waves and the hardened jettison tar, the rest of the sea was almost completely unspoilt.

Noodle: I suppose the island works as like a pile of dirty old clothes that you'd stuff in the corner of your room, sure it makes the rest of your room look tidy, but there will be an eventual point of overflow if you continue to ignore it. Overall, other than having to fight off pirates on a near daily basis, it was a pretty OK experience if I must say so myself.

Murdoc: ..ok?...OK?! Did you hit your head on that cruise ship or something? My Plastic Beach is a MASTERPIECE. Gerry Anderson would blush in embarrassment at the sight of that island, and you just call it an "OK" experience…

2D: And where did you sleep, Russel?

Russel: Well I-

Murdoc: Er…sorry, Russel, when was the last time you changed?

Russel: Plastic Beach is a pretty interesting place, I was surprised Murdoc was able to pull all this together on his own. The record he did without us wasn't bad at all, a lot of tracks on there I get down with quite often, even if we were replaced by plastic machinery.

Noodle: Living with Cyborg Noodle was weird, I mean, I knew she was alive the moment Murdoc activated her, we had this sort of psychic connection, which is how I was able to direct Russel to plastic beach in the first place! That robot was definitely nothing like me though, we may look alike, but we are complete polar opposites, her and I. The first thing that comes to mind is her strange obsession with Justin Timberlake.

2D: Uh, no. It's Timberland, actually.

Murdoc: No, you're thinking of the boots.

Russel: I thought he meant the producer Timbaland.

Timberland: Have you been talking about my PANTS? I'm gonna kill you mothafuckaz! Quit calling me Timberland, mothafucka! It's Timberlake! And my trousers fit me fine.

Noodle: Not long after the tour, Cyborg had some sort of malfunction after suffering from water damage.

Murdoc: 2D! You jebend! I told you to mop up that water on the floor!

Noodle: She tried to kill Murdoc and I had to swiftly decapitate her.

Murdoc: She was a pretty great guitarist…well, up until she went all wonky.

Noodle: I have her head upside down on my coffee table, a bonsai tree grows from it.

Russel: It's kind of prophetic, right? We're all slowly getting replaced by machines. It's happening. Maybe it's already happened and we don't even know. I got replaced by Murdoc's DRUM-O-MA-TIC on the Plastic Beach record, but there's room for only one drumming machine in this band, and that's me. I also wasn't happy about my demos from when I was living with Ike Turner making their way onto this project…I buried that shit for a reason.

Murdoc: You're a real nut sometimes, you know that Russ? Demons shooting out of the speakers, pfft. I get that every day, don't know what you're complaining about.

As Easter approached, and the band began to get promotion underway for 2D's album, It was time for Murdoc to prepare for his final lighthouse broadcast.

ANDY'S
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A Familiar Face

April 2011 *Murdoc broadcasts Pirate Radio 5*

Murdoc: Early morning we had a knock at the door, seemed as though the time had come. There stood the Evangelist, dressed as a postman of sorts, bless! They had the stuff I was waiting on in a lovely little care package, ordered it months back. They said it would arrive 'April-ish' and they were bang on. Very snappy. I was thinking it would be the usual three April-Ishes.

Inside the parcel was a set of record needles, a bottle of baby oil, and two replacement keys, one for the lighthouse and the other for the Doncamatic submarine.

Murdoc: Can't remember where the other two went.

2D: This is rubbish, how was lotion gonna help you out?

Murdoc: Remember Big Rick Black? The big Scottish feller Russ worked for back before we started Gorillaz?

2D: No.

Murdoc: Well his little record shack washed up on the island while my mansion was still under construction, apparently a bunch of suits wanted to buy his store after vinyl died but he refused to give it up, so they threw his shop into the ocean. Once he washed up here the fat sod got himself stuck inside it after eating too many crabs. So the oil was to help lube him up and get him unstuck.

2D: And the record needles?

Murdoc: To push them into the back of my skull. What do you think? What could a radio DJ possibly want with a needle for a record player? Well, Let's see…do you think it could be so I can play some records? I had a radio show to do! And I was missing a key piece of Vinyl, That's the only reason I needed that fat oaf to be able to navigate his shop. So you know as you'd expect the big feller was asleep we smeared him with a combination of butter and the baby oil.

ABOVE
The Postman
"Biiiig package! Sign ere... Take... Sign... Back ere... I'll wait"
EVANGELIST

ABOVE
Big Rick & His Record Shack

2D: That is disgusting, even for you.

Murdoc: We were out of options mate. A crane couldn't get that bugger out, believe me we tried. There was an oil rig set up not so far away from Plastic Beach and even they couldn't get him out with their equipment. Cost me a bloody fortune. He's probably still out there to this day. Too fat to drown, saved by a blubber life raft of his own making.

Murdoc's ludicrous plan succeeded, Rick managed to squeeze his way to the back of the shop to retrieve the record Murdoc was looking for.

Murdoc: Bingo! Here's where things get interesting, right? I was watching the live CCTV footage on one of my monitors when I noticed a satellite come crashing down from the sky right off the shore of Plastic Beach. So, I had one of our fans hook up the Donkatron to the sub, like we did for doncamatic, and search the ocean floor for pieces of the Satellite for us to use to boost the broadcast strength of my Radio show. It was brilliant!

Once Murdoc's fangirl returned to the surface after risking life and limb, Dave the engineer installed the satellite to Murdoc's broadcasting booth at the top of his lighthouse, ready to premiere the fifth and final episode of Pirate Radio.

Murdoc: I made sure everything was perfect. The strange green fog was rolling in once more... this was it. The final curtain call. The Evangelist was here and we all know what that entails. I had an associate of mine who could do a half-decent impression of me wear one of those 'Murdoc Niccals cut-me-out' masks that we sell for the kids, then had him wait out my entire broadcast session in my bunker with a revolver in hand and a cyanide pill in the other. See, with the Evangelist on my doorstep, I used that satellite Dave hooked up to hone in on the black clouds comms, figured that would get the Boogieman's attention and ultimately lead them right underneath the Evangelists boot. So for now, we just had to play the waiting game and broadcast my final episode.

April 8th 2011 *Plastic Beach is destroyed by pirates*

During the final moments of Pirate Radio 5, heavy gunfire along with explosives could be heard emanating just outside of Murdoc's lighthouse. 2D was quickly scoffed down by Massive Dick after his triumphant return, Russel hastefully scooped up Noodle and began to swim away, while Murdoc reactivated Cyborg Noodle and fled to the nearest submarine.

The Fall… of Plastic Beach

May 2011 *Murdoc broadcasts his memoirs from a rusty brown submarine*

Murdoc: During those final hours on Plastic Beach it really did look like I was a goner. The dark was rising, the storms were kicking off, the island was cracking and Jackboots filled the corridors. Needless to say I did make it out alive, so as promised I think I'll be telling you, no, the WORLD the truth behind all this; the real truth about the island, the live band, the Boogieman, the contracts, the tours, the world tours, the bounty hunters, everything. This here book is my memoirs, the greatest story ever told by the greatest band who have ever walked the globe. This will be out there, in the ether, floating around the universe forever more. Just as promised in my radio show.

Get on with it. I believe the world has been left with bated breath for far too long!

Murdoc: Right, where to start?

The Book of M.A.N.

Murdoc: Starting strong, aren't we? So after waking up on the island on Christmas of 2008, the day after finding Plastic Beach, the skies turned black, the shores were cracked and weeping, it looked like the set of the video shoot for 'Welcome To The Black Parade'. Then I discovered a book washed up on the shore, entangled in a net filled with bananas. The Book of M.A.N. is probably the biggest mystery of all. It had this amazing stone-carved front cover. Sadly some illiterate being drew graffiti on it. Though it might have been me, I was drunk from 6 to 6 like a pirate on that blasted island. It was split into 13 chapters, right? Like an encyclopaedia of the history of humanity. The thing that really turned my wicked blood to jam was when I realised it even documented my own arrival on Plastic Beach, at that exact moment. This was no lucky accident, this was planned. Fate? Dunno if I believe in that. I'm famously fearless, but even this revelation sent a chill down my crooked spine. This whole scenario, the whole of Gorillaz, was building up to this Apocalyptic Atlantis. Then I began noticing the pattern, the, ahem, disturbances, odd items sticking out of the island. Bits of planes, large dinosaur bones, telephone boxes, a piece of a Sinclair C5. Root closer and it gets odder still. The Hindenburg wreckage, NASA rockets, a Sphinx, bits of the Titanic. All of mankind's history smashed into one heathen lump to create a Doomsday Atlantis. I still have a scrap actually, here, take a look.

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Primordi Soup
2. Earth
3. Fire, he Wheel & the Gun.
Religion, Magic & the Beginning
4. Romans & Greeks
5. The Middle Ages
6. Industrial Revolution
7. British Empire
8. America & the Rise of the Wes
9. World Wars I & II
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hing, All the Time Fore
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Murdoc: So every chapter was basically a new progression and subsequent calamity to befall man in his crooked ascent, only the last page, the future, was ripped out…missing…like any sane person who's just discovered the world might be about to end I wanted to throw a killer party. Gorillaz were to party like it's roundabout 2010, the end of all things, I was just stayin' alive man, sent out the golden tickets to all our collaborators and prepared for the inevitable. Weird thing was though, I kept cropping up throughout the book, or at least it was someone who looks exactly like me. For a while I thought maybe it was my ancestors or something but when I went back to trace the family tree none of it lined up. Despite it not being totally clear what any of this was actually about it was to me a good call for celebration 'I knew it! I fucking knew it! Everything really is all about me!' I'd scream at the top of my lungs, but when I went to ask Jamie what he thought, that's when it all fell into place…I hate to say this but…

Murdoc checks the perimeter and scrapes his chair closer.

Murdoc: You see, in my dotage, I've come to realise that I'm not…erm…I'm not 100% sure I truly exist. I may, and just mind you, have been born and thrust forth out of the collective minds of those two horrors Damon and Jamie. Four mad separate characters now made flesh, I can't complain, human bands are fucking nightmares. And now it seems they're having quite a hard time sticking us back in the lamp. It doesn't make me any less real but, well, they did give me substance I think… or substances. I'm not sure. I'm guessing that's why I could never make it onto stage either, I kept sort of slamming into the barriers of my own reality, someone should develop an app for that shouldn't they? My point is, I don't think cartoon characters can really die, can they? So my best bet is that I'm some kind of reincarnation, a collective rebirth of ideas, scattered throughout history…whatever I was before in those past lives had been witnesses or catalysts in all of mankind's seismic traumas since the dawn of time, all orchestrated by that bastard Jamie, still, at least Tank Girl's real, I'd have her. Maybe I'm some kind of immortal demon, maybe that was Noodle's secret mission all along, to keep an eye on me and make sure I don't bring about the end of days. I wish I knew all the answers, but I don't. I never got to the end you see, but seeing as I'm the only one here talking to you, I suppose you'll have to take what I say at face value. As king of the world I did try to fulfil my destiny and finish the book, I had help finding some parts of the final chapter, but not all of them, it was all just some nonsense about 'The New World,' whatever that means.

A rather shocking revelation, that's quite a lot to take in, incredibly dense for a band's biography, so what forced you off of Plastic Beach?

Murdoc: Well, as we were wrapping up the finale of my Pirate Radio show Malthus and his Black Clouds, The Boogieman and Pirate Jets had us nailed, after their failed attempt to take the island by storm last time, they must've brought at least 10x more backup, it was mental!

Murdoc: The island was getting bombarded and everyone started abandoning ship, Russel was the first to go, he made keeping Noodle safe his top priority first and foremost. All the collaborators started fleeing to their subs, poor Daley didn't make it out, still, was lucky for me since now I had a ride to get off the death trap. Me and my newly refurbished Cyborg Noodle, now with no voice box to scare the jeebies out of me and her 'kill' switch deactivated so she doesn't go all bladerunner on me again, took the old rusty doncamatic sub and booked it. Oh and 2D? well, last I saw of him was when he got swallowed up by that Massive Dick while shivering in his room like a coward. Russel tried shaking D out of the poor bastard but accidentally let his hand slip…sent the thing flying! So he's probably out there somewhere in that Whale. Living his worst nightmare, good sendoff if you ask me.

And the Book? What happened to the book of M.A.N?

Murdoc: I er…I picked up the wrong book. I kept whatever books I was reading on the podium in my war room, once the bullets started flying my only thought was getting out of there alive, I stupidly picked up the 'The Bastard' in a heinous act of self preservation, good reading material to pass the time I suppose…didn't realise that I'd cocked up until I was already in the sub, I chimed into the CCTV while we were leaving just to make sure the book was safe, and the things I saw… you wouldn't believe. My plan to get the Boogieman off my back worked out perfectly, the bloke I hired to act as my double took one for the team and was left with a hole where his face used to be in my bunker, Boogieman took the wrong soul, my debt was finally paid and I was free! But as he was doing his little ritual thing, the Evangelist, this sort of polar opposite being, and antidote to the Boogieman if you will, burst through the door and started kicking the living shit out of him! Wham! WHAM! The room started cracking as my mansion began crumbling on top of them. The last thing I saw was the Evangelist taking the book from the stand, it seems as though this entire time they'd been scouting the island to get the book back to wherever it came from.

Did you ever find out where it was from?

Murdoc: Nope, but my best bet? 2D had a phase of getting really into H.P. Lovecraft's novels and stuff to pass the time while travelling to and from the island, turns out R'Lyeh, the lost city, is positioned right below where Plastic Beach was. The book must've floated up from there somehow, and the Evangelist was sent to bring it back, I guess the whole postman thing was just a getup to try and get me out in the open to get the Book back, didn't fool me though did it? I guess by the time the Island was literally crumbling more than fruitcake they figured it was more of a 'now or never' situation and ended up booting in my lovely front door.

What happened to the Evangelist then?

Murdoc: I can't say I know, the island it, well, it fell to pieces before they ever made it out, the debris of it all just began swirling in the ocean, the whole building, the rubbish, the lighthouse, the Black Clouds and their leader Malthus, the record shack, the pirate jets, all of it, just swirling into this giant hole. Like-like it was this massive plughole, all of it vanished in the blink of an eye, sucked right down into the bottom of the ocean. There goes my second HQ, Plastic Beach, the garbage of war. Such a shame.

Murdoc: Although I can't say I think that's the last we'll ever see of Plastic Beach. Pollution is a constant in our world, the oceans currents will probably reform the whole place in a decade or so. The higher powers take away miracles just as quickly as they bless them, ey? The Evangelist is probably living in the back of Jamie's head. Caught in the quagmire of his darkest thoughts, battling the Boogieman for all eternity. They might resurface someday, everyone we encounter has the ability to resurface eventually, well, unless they're dead.

Who was the Boogieman?

Murdoc: Simple. Fifth horseman of the apocalypse, the bringer of doom, the right hand man of the underworld. What are you thick or somet? I'm only pulling your Johnny mate. If you're referring to the face under the mask then I really have no clue, in fact I'm not even sure he has a real face at all! But I do remember reading some crackpot theory one of our fans had about the Boogieman actually being my dad, that made me laugh, and I don't often laugh unless it's at something I've said myself. They based their whole theory off the length of my dad's nose, odd one isn't it? I suppose I can see the resemblance, and not just through that. My dad was very much this swirling black hole of everything twisted and vile within humanity, just like the Boogieman. Good theory JP, here's to you mate.

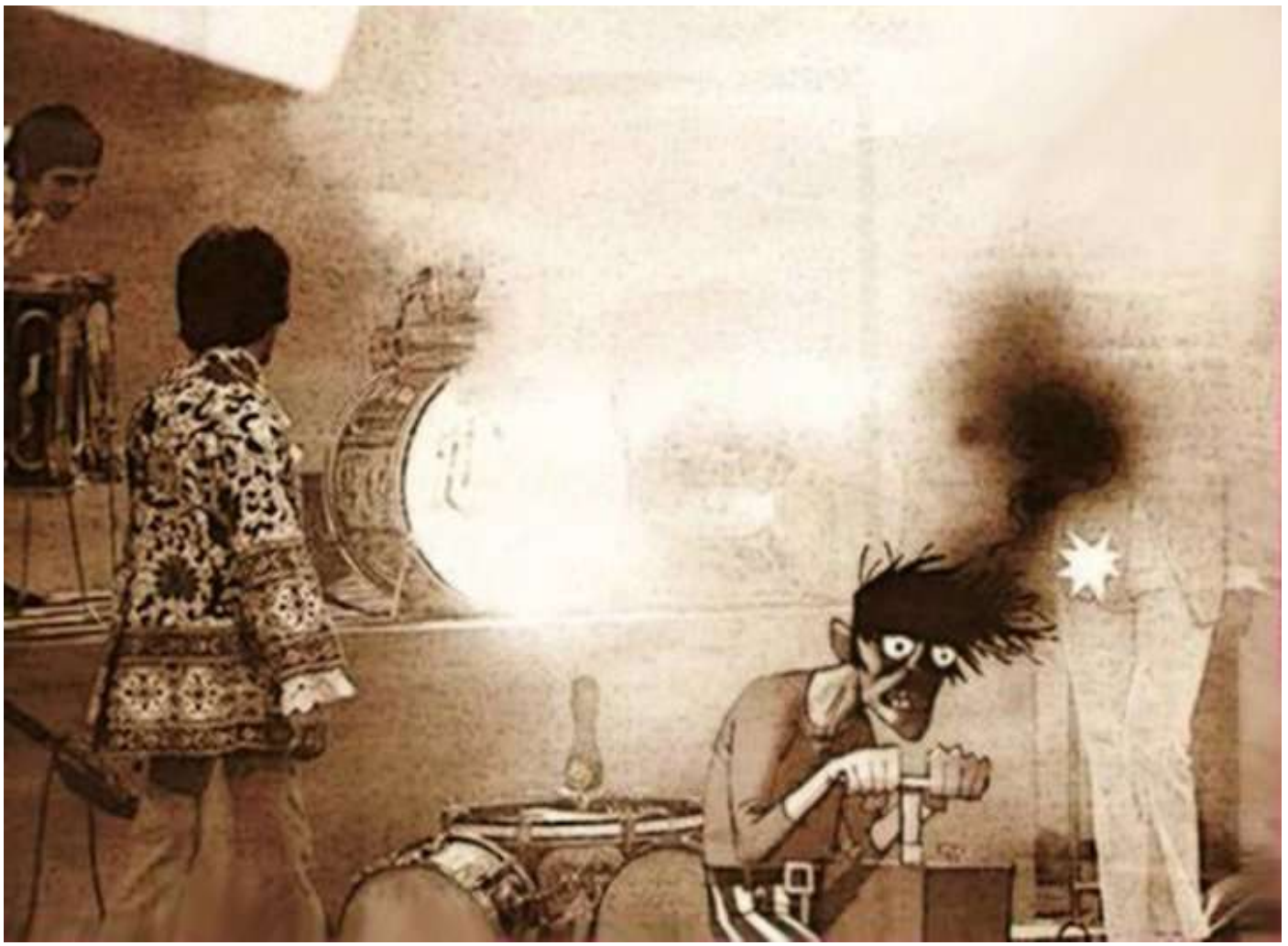
So the final question. What was the final chapter of the book of M.A.N.?

Murdoc: I dunno, but it doesn't take a genius to figure out that those initials are clearly mine. Murdoc. Alphonse. Nicclas. Whatever was written on it definitely had something to do with me…and the end of the world, or at least, the one we know. Maybe we dodged a bullet, you know? Like it's an episode of Doctor Who or something, once you've read it, it's set in stone and you can't go about changing it. Maybe by never finding out what it said Gorillaz never has to end. Some questions are best left unanswered I suppose. But one thing's for sure, I won't be making the mistake of throwing a party for the end of the world again, that next morning was bloody embarrassing. Felt like some kind of satanic mirroring of Harold Camping.

So what's next on the agenda for Murdoc? Seeing as now he's lost his band and his home for a second time.

Murdoc: I was thinking of heading to Hawaii for a bit, take some time to unwind and relax, I'm off the coast of Chile at the moment so it's a bit of a trek admittedly. Look, I need to nip off now, I've just finished my last bottle of Psycho Jerry's rum and I need to pop open the hatch of my Submarine for a quick wazz. Ciao!

And just like that, the transmission was terminated. Concluding the story of Plastic Beach.



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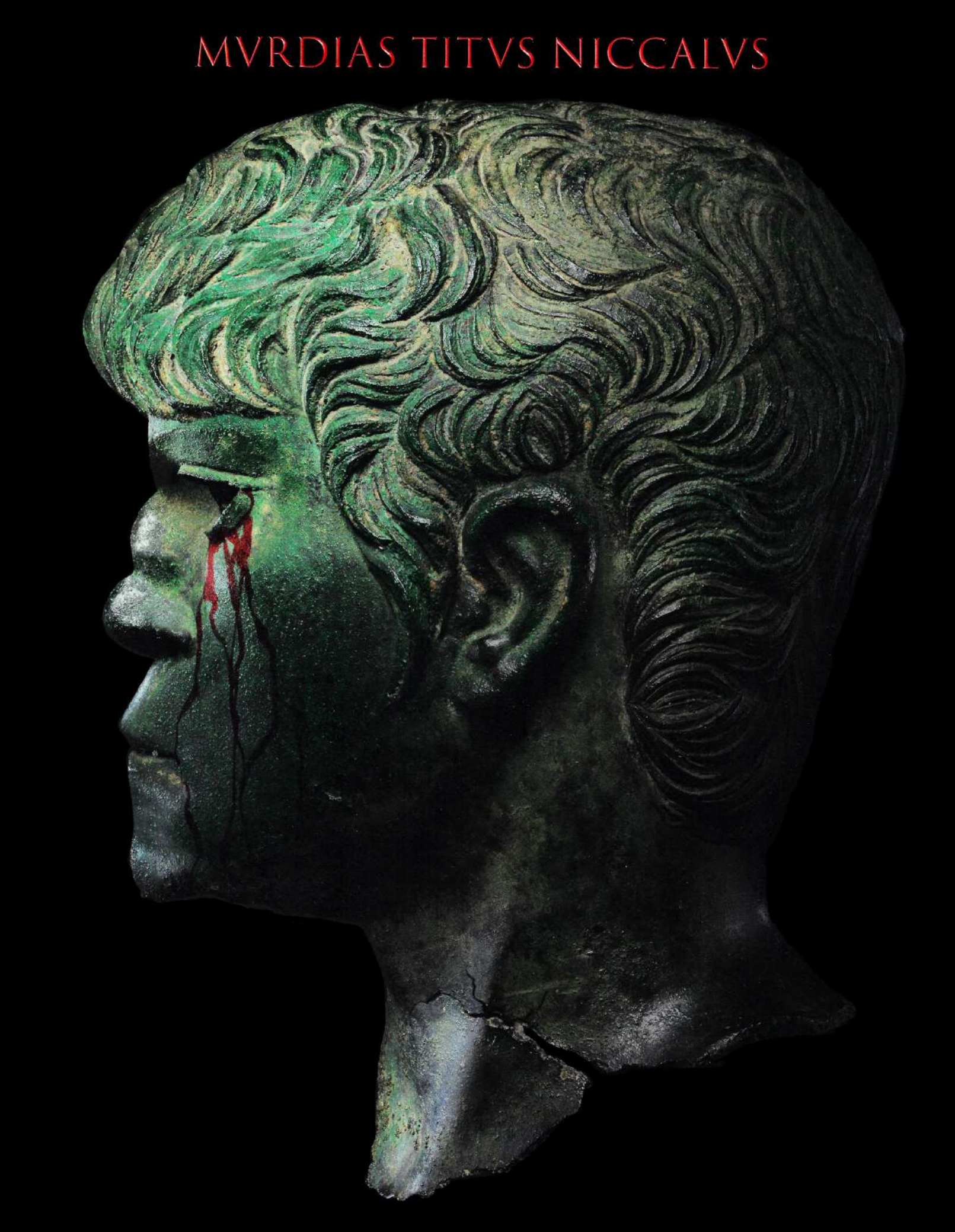


GORILLAZ
DEMON DAYS
KONG
TAZAR
FAULK
MURD

NIPPER
RECORD SHACK
Search for a Star
GORILLAZ
NOODLE
RUSSEL
TAZAR
FAULK

Gorillaz are Ten

Murdoc Sets Sail for Prison

After his beloved Point Nemo HQ sensationally collapsed, our rotten hero and man on the run loitered just beneath the surface of Chile's coast in his creaky rusted submarine, he kept himself busy through the likes of Rum, an annoying set of vuvuzelas, and a first mate with a face as stern as a Queen's Guard.

Murdoc: The last anyone heard from me would've been on Plastic Beach, just as the torpedoes hit the shore. There wasn't a moment to waste! So I activated Cyborg to have her carry a crate of Psycho Jerry's rum down the stairs of the lighthouse for me, hastily changed from a black v-neck and bandana to this smashing white turtleneck and sailors cap (nobody would ever suspect me to wear that!), watched Russel fling 2D in his whale sky ship halfway across the continent while laughing hysterically with a fag in hand, saw our dear old Daley slip on a jellyfish and bang his noggin, had another laugh at that, then made my way into the sub.

Whoooosh!!!

April 8th 2011 *Murdoc leaves ground zero of Plastic Beach*

Murdoc: After watching the whole place come down on my foe the Boogieman and presuming both the book and the Evangelist to be gone, well, there wasn't much to do after that honestly… we just sort of wandered the ocean, through the slimy octopus's garden, past the underwater fighting school, into the bowels of an ancient beast…none of this is as interesting as being arrested though is it? Shall we move on?

It wasn't long before Murdoc's underwater hideout was exposed.

Murdoc: Truth be told I was incredibly bored, I think the last thing I ever tweeted before we lost reception was me furiously laying into Damon's Dr. Dee record after he reused two of my cutting room floor tracks for Plastic Beach, Apple Carts & Tree of Beauty. Vulture! Geier! They were both mine!!! You can even hear the demos in some of those Island teasers we stuck online. Apparently right, he had the nerve to sail over to the swirling debris of Plastic Beach to fish out some of my demos that were bobbing about in the water with one of those big butterfly nets. You'd think he was the bloody cartoon sometimes, wouldn't you? I suppose that's Damo finally getting his revenge for me nicking his tapes two or so years back, as if stealing the limelight last year wasn't enough! Still, at least we're even now.

Finally when the booze ran out, Murdoc made to the surface and popped the hatch, releasing the rum-soaked air of the submersible like a Kraken's guff. As he emptied his dangerously enlarged bladder, a giant shadow loomed over him. Two, if you count the ever-present memory of his disappointed father. But the other shadow was a ship: the Battleship Ringo, owned by music industry giant EMI. Before it was chopped up and sold off like a prize pig, EMI had sent a fleet of ships to search the globe for Murdoc. At last, they had him. The Gorillaz star was captured, slapped about a bit, and placed on house arrest in a new studio home in West London, Wobble Street.

Murdoc: Ah, EMI, the big bad wolf now gone grey…they had it coming. But still, that is - was - my label, you've got to have some kind of mutual respect for one another, even if it feels like they've got a chain round your neck. I got the last laugh in the end, sure I'm banged up with an ankle tag and can't leave any further than the doorstep, but I never paid 'em back for all those loans I took out for the schemes and the videos and the two million dollar mansions built in the middle of the ocean.

And what happened to Cyborg?

Murdoc: Well, she was confiscated when we were taken aboard Ringo, but after EMI went under all the things they'd confiscated over the years from various artists were returned. I managed to get her back after filling out this tedious four hundred page long form. But when she arrived it wasn't just her they'd sent, turns out they also ended up sending all kinds of shit they'd collected floating about at point nemo also, so she's in one of these dusty old boxes and bags somewhere. If you want to try and fish her out, be my guest. It's like a forest of boxes, in fact, there's probably a forest's worth of boxes in here.

2D: I still don't understand why they didn't just throw you in prison.

Murdoc: I'm a valuable asset, aren't I? Gorillaz are a money printing monopoly. Why would they keep me behind bars when I could be making them millions from the comfort of a state of the art studio home? Our new Gorillaz homebase is like a museum to all things Gorillaz. My whole history in one wonky house, I decorated the place with all the awards and accolades of my incredible career to date…home, sweet home. I do get through the Gorillaz HQ's don't I? Kong Studios, GONE. Plastic Beach, GONE. Gorillaz Underwater Fighting School, GONE. ALL GONE.

Back in the pacific, the rhythm king and the asian axe princess were set adrift. Russel left Plastic Beach cradling Noodle in his giant mouth. Their trouble however, was just beginning. Somewhere off the coast of Japan, Russel was mistaken for a whale and harpooned. He managed to wriggle free, but in the tracas Noodle was swept away into the blood-red waters.

Noodle: Luckily I was rescued from the sea and nursed back to health by a retired pearl diver named Chiyoko, so to repay my kindness I took a job as her apprentice, diving for pearls to give to her. It was only when I caught wind of Murdoc's arrest that I decided to return to England. I vowed to Chiyoko that once I'd helped Murdoc out of his situation I'd return, she was very understanding. Chiyoko did a lot for me. She taught me how to hold my breath for a long time when the world around you sucks. But also, that you can't hold your breath forever. Hiding is not the solution, in the end you must breathe the air and smell reality no matter how bad it is. Otherwise, how can you try to do better?

Wounded and delirious Russel struggled on through the ocean, feebly humming the power ballad 'All By Myself' until he lost consciousness. Eventually, he drifted into the warm waters of the yellow sea and washed up on a North Korean beach.

Russel: I was just hallucinating about Western things, like doughnuts and cable TV. Funny what you miss when you can't have it. There's a lesson there. Something like 'Be happy with what you have' or maybe 'don't eat radioactive krill that turns you into a giant and gets you arrested like King Kong in North Korea.'

Murdoc: Please, it can't have been that bad.

Russel: You think I enjoyed being eye-balled and pointed at all day? I'm not you. Murdoc would've loved it, being on-show in the capital, mistaken for some sorta North Korean Godzilla. Man, it was humiliating. They were all laughin' and takin' selfies. At least they would have done if they were allowed camera phones. Dark times, man. I washed up in NK and got put on display, caged in Pyongyang like a freakshow. But then I realised, this is probably the most entertainment these dudes had since someone drew a face on a turnip in 97'. So I found the positive, y'know? Took the power back. That's what we can all do. Take the power back. Case in point: a shrink would say all the wack stuff I've been through, all the undead voices in my head, has messed with my mind. Nah. It's made me sharper, more tuned in. More aware of the shadows creeping their vice-like fingers around us, preparing to squeeze. Some people think I'm nuts. Other day someone said, "Russ, you're paranoid." And I said, "Yeah? And how'd you know my name?" And they said, "Cos it's me, 2D." And I was like, "Is it? How do I KNOW? You might be a cyborg." So I tried pulling his face off. He passed the test. This time...

Russel became the country's biggest attraction and 'I survived Pulgasari' t-shirts became the nation's fastest selling fashion item. Or would have done if people were allowed to sell anything other than manure and tanks. In time, the North's meagre food rations caused Russel to shrink down to half his size. Realising Russel was just an incredibly large man, the Glorious Leader proclaimed that he'd personally defeated Pulgasari, and Russel was released. He was given a signed pressing of 'Kim Sings Sinatra' and sent back to England, where he wandered the streets of London until stumbling across Murdoc's studio home on Wobble street, perching himself upon the roof, awaiting for him to return to normal size.

Russel: I wish people would get over this size thing. The biggest challenge was people judging me. Because yeah, I get it, I was big, I swelled sixty times my normal size, but I wasn't fat, okay? - I've got an overactive thyroid. People can be so damn uncivilised. They see a sixty-foot giant and assume you're up all night crying and spooning cookie dough into your face. It was my THYROID.

2D: He looks like Snoopy up on the roof.

Murdoc: Big fat jelly wobbly fat bastard.

Noodle: Don't say that to Russel. He's very sensitive about his weight. It was just temporary gigantism due to a food allergy. We've all been through a lot.

Esta Noche Fiesta En La Playa

When pirates attacked Plastic Beach, 2D was lost at sea, swallowed by the whale Massive Dick then spat out on a tropical beach thousands of miles away from home. Sadly, the whale, his only companion, perished on arrival. A lifetime spent eating ocean garbage - and now 2D - took its toll on Massive, and he died, leaving his carcass to wash up on the shore. 2D was finally free… to die of starvation, due to a total lack of survival skills. Unable to even catch crabs (which was more Murdoc's forte,) 2D had no option but to eat his former host. Rancid in whale blubber for breakfast, lunch and dinner. With a side order of sand. After several months, 2D exhausted his whale blubber food supply and resorted to eating his clothes, only to then run out of clothes…

2D: It was a scary experience, at first I hated that whale, and all whales. I thought all bloody whales belonged in a big tank at SeaWorld. But the more time I spent inside Massive Dick, the more I realised that he was just a troubled creature, his habitat was turned into a landfill site and his only source of food was Murdoc feeding him in exchange of keeping me at bay, it's a tragic story really.

2D: I was still mourning the death, the worst part was being forced to eat Dick in order to survive, which made me sad because we'd become quite good friends. The whole experience taught me a lot. Mostly, try not to eat your friends. Unless you're really hungry.

Murdoc: The tragic tale of having a massive dick.

2D: Sometimes I miss the time I spent with Massive. At night I would go to sleep with my head on his soft aorta, listening to the slow beating of his heart. It was like being back in the womb, just slightly fishier. I cried like a baby when Massive spat me out. Even more when I had to eat him to survive. You can't go that long in a whale's stomach without bonding, like when you get a tapeworm.

Murdoc: You wot?

2D: I had trouble finding a wifi signal. So at first I felt quite lonely. But I started to enjoy a bit of me-time in the end. Even wrote a few songs using the rib cage as a xilophone.

Have I spelt xlyophone right? Xylofone. Hang on…
Just looked it up in the dictionary. Xylophone.

Murdoc: Fuck me. Freud would have a field day with you. The kid's lucky to be alive. A monstrous beast, that whale. No relation to Moby, incidentally. Scourge of the Pacific. Known as 'Polla Masiva' by Mexican fishermen.

2D: Being stranded on a tropical island taught me lots of survival skills. Like how to run away from crabs, sideways, and how to stay alive by eating your own clothes. Actually, when I was down to just my underpants, I learned my most important lesson - we don't need all the things we think we do, like massage chairs, bluetooth and Two Broke Girls. We just need fresh air, sunshine and Two Broke Girls. I really love that show.

Noodle: Didn't Two Broke Girls come out after you returned?

2D: I'm talking from a position of hindsight, you know. Like if I knew it was gonna be a thing…I think.

Murdoc: Someone's getting fired for that…

Noodle: A whale's gastric juices must be very healthful and enriching. 2D's skin has never looked better. More... human, somehow.

2D: You'd be surprised how much nourishment you can get from eating your clothes. I made quite a nice shredded T-shirt salad to accompany the whale blubber.

Living off a soup diet of whale, sand and socks, 2D remained marooned for a total of 164 days before making a startling discovery. He wasn't actually on a desert island. He had in fact landed on Guadalupe, off the Mexican coast. A bustling holiday destination with a population of 4000,000. What a moron…

2D: I spotted a plane flying along the coast, I couldn't believe it, I was moved to tears!

He set off in its directions. Twenty-three minutes later he was in the middle of a full-scale beach rave. He joined the party, ate some strange tasting brownies, and came third in the wet T-shirt contest. As he claimed his prize, 2D had a eureka moment. He would have a gap year and find himself.

Murdoc: You know this finding yourself thing?

2D: Mhm.

Murdoc: How's that coming along?

2D: Er…quite…quite…

Murdoc: Slowly?

It turned out finding himself was really easy - he was right there. But he stayed the rest of the year anyway until he got sacked from his job weaving friendship bracelets. It was time to fly home. At Heathrow a man at arrivals held up a sign saying 'Wanker'. 2D followed him to his car, which drove him to West London's Wobble Street, where he was reunited with Murdoc, Russel and Noodle. Gorillaz were back.

2D: I learned that you need very little to get by in life: just a fire and some food. It was an enlightening experience. I'm actually hoping to go back to the island some day - partly to learn more survival skills, and also 'cos I left one of my flip-flops. The flip, I think. Or maybe the flop. Never know which is which. The point is, they belong together - the distance must be really painful. Massive Dick was always inside of me. Actually, that was the title of the song I wrote about him, but Murdoc wouldn't let me put it on a record. Anyway, Massive and I will always be connected. He is part of me now. Literally, because I ate so much of it, so we're bonded at the atomic level.

October 4th 2011 *Murdoc breaks his four-month long radio silence*

Murdoc: Goah, I got really itchy hands today. Gorillaz are TEN. Ten years old, eh? T.E.N. What's that stand for? The End is Nigh! Coffee patron! What a way to start the day, I'm wide awake and totally out of it. It's a big day today… The Kraken Awakes! I feel a bit...celebratory. So let's take a look at our best bits! All the singles! On one album. What's that? X-mas is coming? Really? I wonder what to get all my horrible children? Oh yeah, I know!...

October 5th 2011 *Gorillaz: The Single Collection is announced*

Murdoc: Always said Plastic Beach was the finest panel in my Gorillaz triptych. But here's the best cuts from all three crushed into one dinky CD! I've ripped the best chapters out of my first three Gorillaz musicals, and stitched them into one big bumper edition. Sounds….grrreeat! That Coffee Patron is making my eyes ache! Totally kranked on caffeine and Tequila. Did I tell you we're releasing a Gorillaz Singles Album? Rillaz are TEN. "This Extravaganza's Nutz…!" This record is making my whole island shake! Sounds l.o.u.d.! Happy Christmas everyone! God it's hot in here…

Over the course of fourteen days, Murdoc released three brand new audio treats for fans in celebration of their decade-long milestone supposedly from an undisclosed beach in Hawaii.

November 25th 2011 *Episode 1 of Murdoc's We Are 10 Show is released*

Murdoc: Mmh…fantastic, Pina Colada, lovely, ooh it's very strong, oooh and a little umbrella in it too! How marvellous thank you darling, now run along and go pop some clothes on. I gotta do my little radio show. It's time to update the fans on all things Gorillaz. We're ten years old, you know? I don't look a day over…nine…do I? Gorillaz ten years old, fucking hell… that'll be bleeped right.

November 28th 2011 *Episode 2 of Murdoc's We Are 10 Show is released*

Murdoc: Ok, ok, yeah. Very very good, uh, ok. Can I tell you Sydney where I'm at? This has been an awful audition for you and for us. I mean you've turned up drunk, topless, and with a massive heroin habit…you've been spitting at the audience and you've carved the words 'I need a fix' into your chest. I mean really, I have no idea where I'd place you after this competition but y'know, I have to say there is something about you Sydney, something that I think we can work with. You may be the very thing we're looking for…It's a yes from me, you've got four yeses Syd. You're through to the next round.

December 9th 2011 *Episode 3 of Murdoc's We Are 10 Show is released*

Murdoc: I don't know, where was I? It's a long story this. Anyway, yeah after I escaped Plastic Beach I got into all kinds of trouble in my sub, most of which I just can't repeat here. I'm sure it'll come out sooner or later, that's the way the world is now isn't it? You can't even throttle someone with your bare hands without ending up on Facebook or whatever the thing is called. I got caught up in a duel in which I shot a man dead with a pistol…er…lost the top part of my ear in the Malay…got TRAPPED inside a glass bottle in an underwater cave, fought a shark…which I learned to do in underwater fighting school. So, I've kept myself busy really. And eventually…eventually, I wound up here…in Hawaii! I think it's, well, you know, gorgeous island. Just. Gorgeous. What an incredible…journey…what a way we came ey? Camden Brownhouse in 98' to headlining Glastonbury last year. We took that sound and sailed it around the world. Played the Grammys with Madonna just in a nappy and bus drivers hat, me, not her. Then Madison Square Gardens and recording with Dennis Hopper, Ike Turner, Bobby Womack, Snoop, Lou Reed, D12, Ibrahim Ferrer, Una Stubbs…I mean, I only started this band as a joke really. If we could headline the Withered Hand in Stoke we might be able to pull a bird or two. Now look, incredible! And the bullet points of that journey, the singles, are all collected now, forever, on one album…out now.

November 28th 2011 *The Singles Collection is released*

Murdoc: Gorillaz, The Singles. 2001-2011. What a package, even if I do say so myself!

The Singles Collection charted at #46 on the UK Albums Chart.

Murdoc: (Ahem) Listen, don't look now but there's a bloke outside that window pointing a Dragunov at my head and he'll pull the trigger If I don't keep talking about this compilation album. Just go Amazon a copy or something, alright?

Despite his persistent remarks, perhaps Murdoc wasn't exactly where he claimed to be during his broadcasts…

GORILLAZ
TOMORROW COMES TODAY

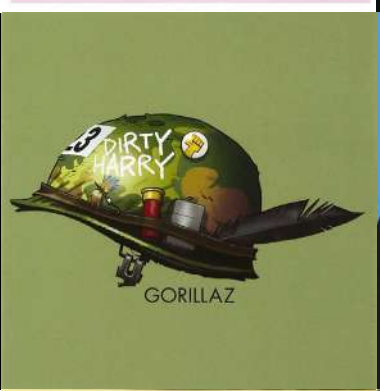
GORILLAZ
Clint Eastwood

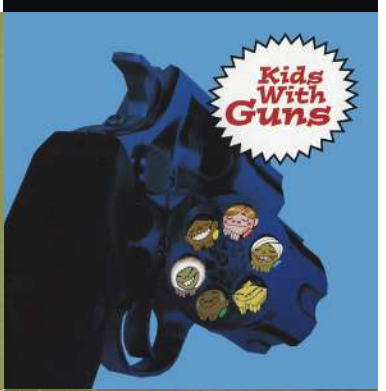
GORILLAZ
19/2000

GORILLAZ
ROCK the HOUSE!
Parlophone

GORILLAZ
FEEL GOOD inc

挑戦
(DARE)
EP SERIES


DIRTY HARRY
GORILLAZ


Kids With Guns

el mañana
GORILLAZ

GORILLAZ
STYLO

GORILLAZ
SUPER FAST Jelly FISH

GORILLAZ
ON MELANCHOLY HILL

GORILLAZ
FEATURING DALEY
'DONCAMATIC'

GORILLAZ
RHINESTONE EYES

DoYaThing

The way I feel tonight, I think I'm-a wear these shades for the rest of my life.
That way, you won't be able to see the disappointment in my eyes…'

Murdoc: Oh Yeah! Gorillaz are BACK. In. ACTION.

2D: I'm jazzed…

Murdoc: Chin up, 2D! That's right, we're going for round four! Get. On. Your. Fucking. Knees.

September 2011 *Gorillaz were reunited after a five month period set adrift.*

Murdoc: Has it only been five months since Plastic Beach sank? Man, time flies…but er…yeah, we are now, together again, in one way or another. The fallout from the Plastic Beach campaign, and the trauma of that whole conflict; the battles, the burnouts, the exodus from the island... The whole sinking of Plastic Beach. It has kind of thrown us all together again. 'Kismet', they call it…We seem to be inexorably joined at the hip. Nice to see Noodle again, and my, hasn't she grown? It's like the Monkees around here now. We're all living together in the same house, just like the old days. Ahh…it warms your heart doesn't it? the whole gang back together.

2D: Usually it takes at least a year or two before we get back together to record an album, so things felt off…I mean, it hadn't even been a year since Plastic Beach fell apart. Murdoc kept going on about closing the book on Gorillaz, and now we're back together to record a new single? And maybe even more beyond that? And all just cos that bender got himself slapped about by EMI, why am I being punished too?

Noodle: We were left with what felt like very little choice. Either we were to continue making music in exchange for Murdoc's sentence being shortened, or we were to walk away.

Russel: My reasons weren't even close to that. I listened to Plastic Beach and was just blown away. The idea that something so mature and focused could've come from the likes of…

The three turn to look at Murdoc.

Murdoc: What…have I got shit on my face?

Russel: He's…an acquired taste, but then so are Gorillaz. I wanted to work with that new centralised vision Murdoc had found when he was on the island, but I think that window of opportunity already passed. As soon as we were back in business he was up to his old tricks again. Makes me think we're sometimes part of the problem for letting him pull this shit with no repercussions.

Murdoc: You're paid for percussion, not repercussions. You want me to find the paperwork?

Noodle: We wanted to be in the studio together again, but the atmosphere didn't aid us creatively.

Russel: I think we've probably OD'ed on one another. It's the easiest thing to get going again, we do the music, we do the videos. The four of us don't even need to talk to one another to do it, I mean, look at Plastic Beach. We don't even need to be on the same continent.

Murdoc: Probably because of how fat your fucking heads gotten.

Noodle: We hadn't produced anything as a four-piece on Plastic Beach, perhaps our chemistry which made us mesh had dissipated…or maybe it was too soon to get back together. Plastic Beach was still fresh in everyone's minds, Russel hadn't even finished shrinking back to normal size and we were jumping right back into it like nothing happened.

Murdoc: What are you all on about? Stop sitting around whining, let's sell some shoes! It's the money or stop, right?

ABOVE
"Album 13!? I like your thinking!"
MURDOC NICCALS

November 16th 2011 *Gorillaz announce collaboration with Converse*

Murdoc: So how did all this come about? Ok let me fill you in.

Russel: Here we go…

Murdoc: Let me fill your boots! Back last year I met up with the good people over at Converse. A couple of them had come over on a daytrip to my Plastic Beach HQ. We'd been talking about a Gorillaz x Converse hookup for a while so we thought it was time to take it further, yeah? And they wanted to see if we, Gorillaz, could help them sell their soles…and Russel's never really out of his so it seemed ideal. The plan was to get a range of the shoes together using Gorillaz own special artwork. So, I put in a call to our art and video director Jamie Hewlett to see if he'd like to put something together with us. Jamie did and they looked great. I think they need to be worn in a bit, to give them that skuzzy feel, but they look really good and I got a special pair of shiny patent leather cuban heeled converse thrown into the deal so everything was looking nice and sparkly for us.

2D: I particularly like the camouflage ones. They're the ones I'll be wearing.

Russel: The exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas. That's what Gorillaz are all about, working and collaborating and exchanging ideas with other artists and global communicators.

Russel: We've been trading in ideas and conversing with one another for ten whole years. So I couldn't think of a better bunch of people to help celebrate our decade in the business than the good people over at the Converse shoe company. Plus I've been wearing my Chuck Taylor's since forever.

Murdoc: Just opening a limited edition of a vintage Converse.com branded rum, powerful stuff, a bit of a kick to it. Maybe I should mix this with a sort of ginger beer…mmm…yeah…nice.

However, this collaboration wasn't stopping just at shoes, Converse asked if Gorillaz could record a new single for their 'Three Artists, One Song' campaign, in which Converse would put Gorillaz with two other artists, and the trio would record a new single to be released alongside the shoes.

Murdoc: Converse said it'd be good to have a track, y'know, some music. And I thought it'd be wonderful to put something together with Converse, music-wise. It's what we do, Gorillaz. Music. We're known for it. And I liked their whole 'Three artists – One Song' idea. Gorillaz are all about the collaboration, aren't we? So it seemed like a perfect fit, like a hairy Cinderella in a set of size nines. So I went back and flipped through some ideas, some outlines for the track. I got my bass out and twanged some new parts down and started cooking up some spicy groundwork but it wasn't sitting right, the track wasn't really working. It needed something else, something really fresh, something that would really fit into this whole shoe song and dance deal. I went back to speak to the peeps over at Converse and we drew up a wishlist of players, people we'd want to work with and throw into this rich sticky mix, artists to work with on the Converse collaboration. Ultimately I settled on two artists…

And who's up to the pitcher's mound?...Andre 3000 of Outkast, and Mr. James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem.

2D: Sound Of Silver is a great album. A fantastic piece of work. I've always been a big fan of keyboards and technology and bloopy noises and Krautrock and everything else, so LCD Soundsystem really works for me.

Russel: Gorillaz love Outkast, they're one of the few outfits that all four of Gorillaz love. Aquemini, Speakerboxxx/The Love Below, and Stankonia are great albums. Like Sly and The Family Stone or Parliament, Outkast always capture that really colourful, really liquid, playful funk and wrap it round with lyrics about love, politics, truth and fun.

Murdoc: Right, but here's where the whole situation gets a bit sticky. You see, I couldn't get a hold of Andre or James, my dream team wishlist A-players, some other names were suggested, some second choice names runner ups. But y'know when I've made my mind up I'm pretty stubborn about these things. I work with the people I want or not at all, thankfully that's where my trusty…er… hang on…where's the chloroform gone?

Russel: Noodle and I threw all that shit away man.

Murdoc: But whyyy…I NEED IT.

Russel: You know exactly why…

Murdoc: But It's the only way I can get to sleep, I don't want the visions to come back. THEY'RE TOO VIVID, where's my glass? My hands gone all shaky…fuck it. I'll just break into their studio and take a song that I like.

Russel: Jesus man, you can't stay out of trouble for one second can you?

Murdoc: If you can't kidnap, then you just gotta steal. Steal or no steal. Deal or no steal…no wait steal or no deal. Where am I going with this?

2D: Well, it's either a deal…or not. That what you meant?

Murdoc: Perfecto. I think I should be on the telly. Imagine me in a tux on tuesday nights after tea.

Russel: Could you shut up?

Murdoc: It took a whole lot of work and planning, I had to track down their studio location, scout out the place, find where all the alarms and lasers were, then break in! On Christmas Day no less! I lowered myself into Andre's gaff, dressed in deepest black, and like an evil black-hearted Santa, I helped myself to the goodies… I flicked through their works in progress and just lifted this wonderful track, a collaboration between Andre and James Murphy. It was perfect! Such clarity, such swing! It was great! A real solid starting point. All I had to do was sprinkle a little of my own potent Gorillaz charm into the mix, stick it in the oven for twenty minutes – Gas Mark 5 – and watch as the musical soufflé rose. It wasn't long until James and Andre realised that I stole their demo and they came pounding at our front door. They're not very happy I stole their track. But it's so much better now! I think when they hear the final mix, they'll love it. And they should be flattered I brought them into the Gorillaz fold! Some people, eh?!

The feud between Gorillaz and these two artists would last over the course of a few days, in which the duo continuously sent threats to Murdoc and Co.

Murdoc: I don't know why they're so ticked off about me using their track. I think what I've done with it sounds amazing. Tarts. One of them lobbed a grenade through my window! And a baboon dressed as a postman at my door just handed us some notice. 'Cease and Desist' order. Fuck 'em. Don't care. This track is coming out, whatever…'Cease and Desist'. Good name for a remix that.

Murdoc: How could I possibly 'give the track back' impossible. It's been mastered and Mp3'd now. Sorry mate, this one's gone. Let it go.

Noodle: We had to try and defuse the situation in the best manner possible, we came to an agreement that all six of us would work together on the track and submit it for Converse's 'Three Artists - One Song' commission.

2D: Wasn't that what we were supposed to do in the first place?

Russel: I don't think Converse's management can count.

Murdoc: I knew they'd see the light at the end. I do have to thank Converse for helping this all to happen, y'know. There's not many companies with the courage and creative capacity to - not only support - but actively encourage one artist 'borrowing' the music of another. But I guess it's forward thinking like that - putting the creative goal above all else – that's what makes them such a fine company.

Russel: We hired out Damon's Studio 13, seeing as we didn't have the money to set up another shop of our own.

2D: It's within walking distance too!

Noodle: I see Damon biking to and from almost every morning.

Murdoc: Yep. Every mourn… just as the cockerel roosts.

2D: That's when a cockerel sleeps though init. What are you on about?

Murdoc: Wa…wa, WA. Cock-er-al. Ha.

Noodle: Cockadoodledoo!

2D: Working with Andre 3000 was amazing! He is a phenomenally talented musician. He looks good, dances insanely well, sings beautifully, and he plays about six instruments. So, you know, he's great. He was a bit of an odd sort though. He always walked around shirtless wearing this mask and fedora hat.

Russel: He was like an Elf On The Shelf, we'd find him in all these bizarre locations, in cabinets, drawers, under the bed.

Murdoc: There's an Andre on my entrée.

2D: James is also an ideal person to hang out with in the studio cause he likes the techy side of things and he's also really gifted musically.

James Murphy: I have my own studio habits based around being alone, so it was totally refreshing to go to Gorillaz's studio. I didn't have to feel any of the pressure of it being my place, or apologise for this or that, or make sure everybody felt happy. I just got to walk around and play with new things.

Murdoc: It was electric getting back into the studio again. I first got Noodle to add some more roaring buzz soaring guitars, then next I built up the drums with great big Russel. He smashed and pounded his way through thirty drum kits to get the beat just right on this. He smashed the beat to smithereens, the studio is just a mess of splinters and ripped up drum skins. But the crowning glory, the real golden setting for this 24 karrot piece of hip-hop and rock was the vocals…I have to hand it to the blue haired gimp 2D's done it again his vocals just glide over this track, like, I don't know, some kind of silky russian ballerina…mmm…nice. I think it's one of the best things we've ever done. It seems to encompass every aspect of the Gorillaz oeuvre, almost like it's got a little ingredient from each period of the Gorillaz back catalogue. It's hip-hop, it's funk, it's rock, it rolls… It's got it all. It does its, er... 'thing", y'know! This will take the edge off any hangover, blast the cobwebs right out of your earhole, in style, made to be played at setting: 2012.

Russel: Andre's lyrics are really great too, incredible - very fluid. He's an incredible rapper, so tight. And the lyrics just pour forth like a tidal wave out of him. And – as Andre sings in this cut – he really is the shit.

James Murphy: It was literally akin to a bunch of kids playing with toys until someone else said, 'Ooh! I like that bit!' ... Writing the lyrics was the funniest part... one person would be mumble-singing something and another would overhear him and ask, 'Oh… did you just sing…' I don't know... some crazy words that weren't at ALL what the guy was singing, and those new, misunderstood words could become the hook for a verse. I loved that about it.

Noodle: We recorded the remainder of this song in the span of three days! On the last day we extended the song from 4 minutes to 13 minutes. It's quite an insane progression. This version evolved out of just a drum beat and a guitar, and then André just started going, and there was no sense that he was ever gonna stop. It was a very exhilarating ride. It's live: I'm playing guitar, the drum machine is going, James is playing bass, and André just goes off. And what he's saying just gets more and more ridiculous. It finished on its own will, we really had nothing to do with it.

James Murphy: When André started singing, Murdoc and I just looked at each other, like, "Holy shit, we love his voice." Then 2D sang, and his voice is amazing, too. We'd been working and playing keyboards in the little studio room and, in a weird way, you could forget that 2D has this really distinct voice that's like a part of your history.

2D: My opening was a one-take. The only problem is I'm not as good at ad-libbing, in the sense of it making sense, so mine's a bit more in tongues.

James Murphy: I like the entire track, but the 'I'm the shit' bit is where my heart is. For the rest of my life, I will remember playing an EMS synth with Noodle's guitar going through it and listening to a loop of my own drums, at the same time as watching Andre scream "I'm the shit!" two hundred times. It's fun to make music while you're laughing.

2D: The line "I am the shit" that Andre 3000 sings is actually from an encounter I had with Brian Eno on the street. I asked Eno how things were going and Eno replied, "Everything I'm working on is coming out great."

James Murphy: We all laughed because that's literally like saying, "Oh, it's great-- I'm the shit." So it turned into a thing. It was pretty genius. It's just basically André riffing on that idea.

Murdoc: At the end of the day, do I feel guilty about nicking Andre and Jame's original track? No Way, José! My conscience is as clear as my recent history. Let me explain…I move in mysterious ways, for the greater musical good. If I didn't, these tracks would never happen. I do it all for you, Damien!!! Eventually, this beast of a track was finally complete! James Murphy decided to return back from whence he came when we were done. For some odd reason, Andre never left, he just stuck around, I think he was just trying to put himself into our band, suppose he just really misses OutKast or something. It is a shame cos I think if James stuck around we could've recorded the next Gorillaz record together…oh well, guess we're gonna have to do without him, right gang?

Noodle: Er…Mur-

Murdoc: BUT! We have one more manner to attend to before we settle in and get some more recording done, we need to do what every great single needs…a promo piece! Hold on…do I hear those Passion Picture dorks at the front door?

With the single set to release in a week, Passion Picture hastily made their way to 212 Wobble Street in the very early hours of the day. Setting up cameras all around the house.

Russel: We didn't have much time to map out a proper video, so Passion Pictures just came to our house on a whim and recorded the daily morning routine of 2D.

2D: Those camera's must've been those little tiny ones cos I didn't even know I was being filmed… probably wouldn't have taken a piss if I knew I was on camera.

Murdoc: My house is covered in cameras, screens, cables, idiots, clapperboards and people running out for cappuccinos. Stomping their mucky feet through my kitchen. Scumbags! I hate making videos. Half the time someone's trying to kill me in them…

After a brief shot of a Nile Crocodile attacking Thomson's Gazelles, the video opens in 2D's room.

2D: Who the fucks Nile Crocodile?

2D wakes up at 7:15 and takes a moment to pull himself together before staggering into the restroom, taking a quick toilet trip, and blearily checking his reflection in the mirror.

Murdoc: We can put it in our press, '2D found dead in his bed.'

2D: How did you get that shot? I didn't see any camera in the reflection?

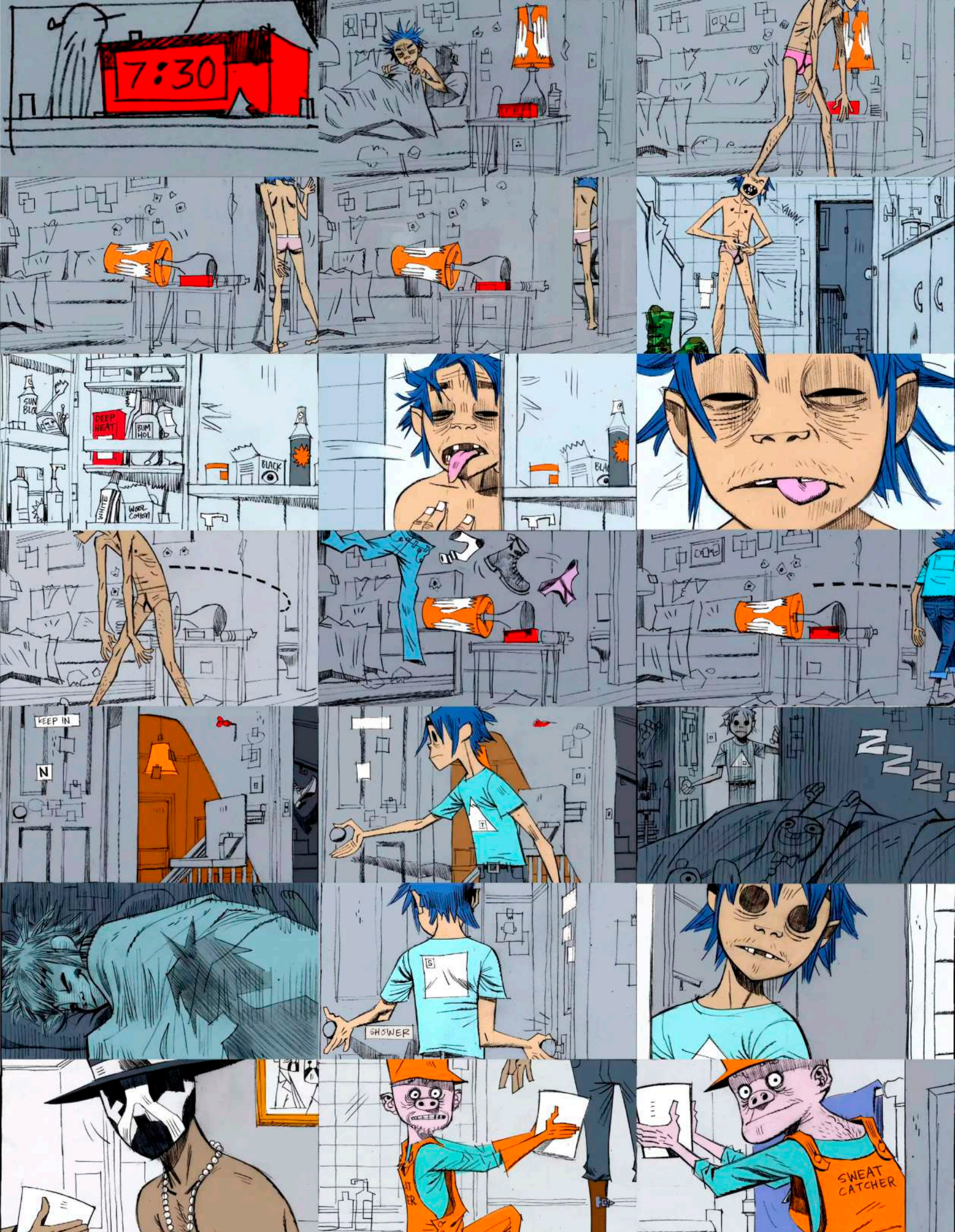
Murdoc: The magic of technologyyy.

Russel: We spent quite a lot of time picking out a pair of pants for 2D, maybe a few days. That's about ten thousand pounds out of our budget spent on the pink pants.

Murdoc: G Foot Ltd. folks, grab 'em while they're hot!

Noodle: Look at the spot on his back, don't you just wanna 'POP!'.

Murdoc: It's like a horror film.


7:30
YAWN!
SUN BLO
DEEP HEAT
BUM HOL
BLACK
WHITE
WOOL COTTON
KEEP IN
N
Z Z Z
SHSWER
SWEAT CATCHER

2D dresses himself and staggers downstairs, briefly checking on a sleeping Noodle on the way.

Noodle: Those camera people came really early, I was still asleep! That was sweet of you to check in on me though.

2D: Just wanted to make sure you were still there…

2D then opens the door to another restroom, where he comes across Andre 3000 and two blue-skinned men who are collecting his sweat drops.

Murdoc: I do hope Andre approves his lookie-likey…he's the spitting image I think…agency has done a good job.

2D: Er…that's not a lookie-likey, that's Andre.

Murdoc: We're being visited by his presence. Very spooky! We've had ghost rappers on film before. But not while they're still alive. This is TV gold.

Confused and disgusted, 2D proceeds to knock on Murdoc's door, and slowly opens his door, only to find a black void with the sounds of farm animals and someone crying in chains.

Russel: What the hell was going on in your room?

Murdoc: It's actually pretty cosy.

Noodle: Whenever I walked by your room it felt like…minus twelve degrees in there.

Murdoc: If any of you had the balls to have actually gone inside, you'd find it's quite warm, and bright. Very cheerful.

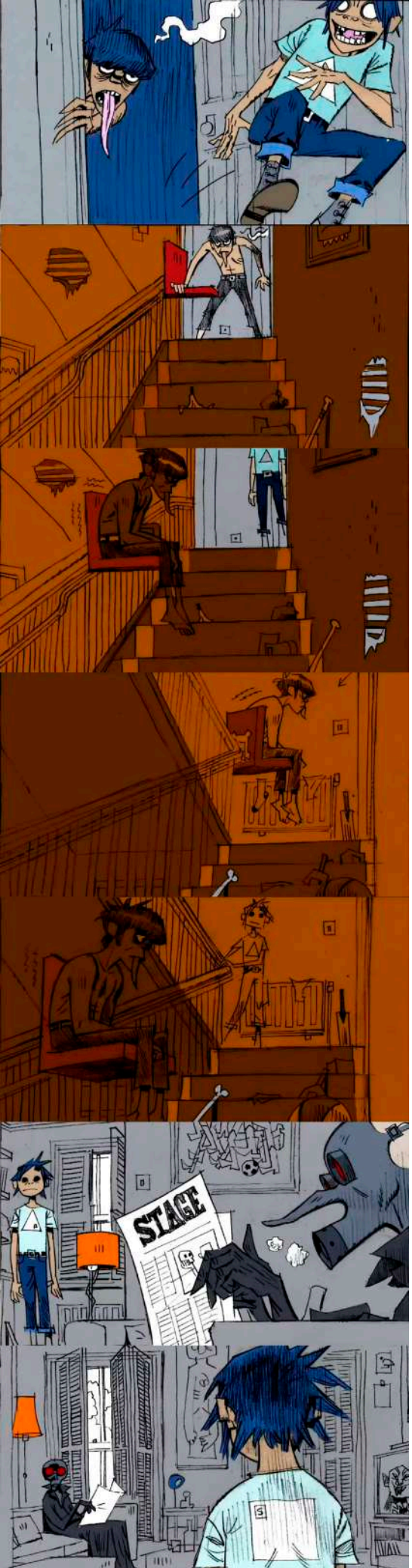
Murdoc suddenly emerges, terrifying the half-awake 2D in the process. He lurches into a very broken chair lift as it begins to move downstairs carrying the near comatose bassist. 2D quietly follows and enters a lounge where he finds the Boogieman reading the paper. He thinks nothing of it and carries on walking downstairs.

Noodle: The hallways in our house are quite narrow, so Passion Pictures had to widen them in post so the shot didn't look as cluttered.

2D: Why was he there? Wasn't there this big huge feud you two had.

Murdoc: You know, I don't owe you lot an explanation for everything…what happens at wobble street, stays at wobble street…he did drop off some flyers for this 'Boogie Nights' musical thing that he was involved with, think he was hoping for some kind of endorsement. Nothing more.

2D: But Murdoc-



Murdoc: WHAT HAPPENS AT WOBBLE STREET…STAYS. AT. WOBBLE. STREET. It's like a bubble, yeah? Don't pop it.

2D tries to slip past a growling Murdoc without any repercussions. After making it into the kitchen, 2D heads for the cupboard to find the Andre 3000 inside. He nonchalantly closes it, trapping Andre's fingers.

Russel: That must've hurt.

2D: I told you! He's everywhere! I'm so sick of it!

After slipping some bread into the toaster, 2D yawns and tries to pick his nose with his tongue.

2D: It's a habit I could never let go of…luckily I don't have to use my fingers though.

After the enraged Murdoc manages to get his stuck chair lift moving, 2D's toast pops up, landing in a nearby bowl of human ears. 2D heads for the fridge to find Andre in there, offering him milk and jam.

2D: SEE! How did he even do that? Maybe he is just an apparition.

Murdoc: Nah. He's the shit.

As Murdoc's chair rounds the corner of the staircase, 2D checks out the comics in the paper, noting a Gorillaz comic where Murdoc is being unusually nice to him. He looks up to find Murdoc in the flesh standing over him. Murdoc swats 2D's head violently with his camouflage Converse shoe, then throws it across the room and heads for the basement, glaring at 2D before leaving. Miserable, 2D stares despondently at his burnt toast topped with an ear and a cigarette butt before switching off the radio, silencing the song, and wanders off.

Murdoc: Don't hold that bit at the end against me, it's a video to promote shoes, we needed to show them off somewhere.

2D: I couldn't stay here anymore, it wasn't good for my head, in both senses. Even with Noodle and Russel there Murdoc's presence was too intense.

Murdoc: We actually shot this video on Valentines Day so, er…happy Valentines Day. It's good to have friends!

Now with a jacket on, 2D heads into the hallway and out the front door as Murdoc is recording the 'We Are Ten' Radio Show. Zipping up his jacket, 2D is met with a baboon postman holding an eviction notice. His mood vastly improves.

2D: (snickers) Brilliant…with us getting evicted, it means that he'd have to serve the rest of his sentence behind bars, album or not, I had no reason to stay there anymore! It was perfect!

Murdoc: Why's there a baboon at my front door?

2D wanders out into the street as the camera pans up on the house, revealing a still-giant Russel relaxing on the roof and the decaying remains of the windmill island hanging in the sky above.

Murdoc: Now that's peculiar…I don't recall our inflatable island being back, I suppose it must've been from Jamie, cos once Passion Pictures left, the island was gone.

Huzzah! Another Gorillaz promo was done with.

Murdoc: This video is like the Citizen Kane of the pop promo world, another magnus opus from the Gorillaz cooperation…was that too much hype? I don't think so. Can't wait to see the finished job though…once all the FX are on. Should look like…Avatar or something.

February 14th 2012 *Gorillaz x Converse shoe line is released*

Murdoc: It's all too much, just look at the love! We're all back together again under one roof, we haven't been this snug since… well…the start of this band! It's funny isn't it, world tours, platinum albums, grammys, novellos, all of this tore us apart… but a shoe deal with Converse…it's like virtual glue. We're back together, all under one roof. That's the power of quality footwear isn't it?

February 23rd 2012 *Do Ya Thing single is released*

Murdoc: IT'S OUT! IT'S OUT! Well this is the moment we've all been waiting for, the big reveal. The final twist in this epic undertaking, and it's better than you could have ever possibly imagined, really this is it! The Gorillaz requiem! The feature length deluxe edition leather bound release of Do Ya Thing. My word, what an epic, It's Atlantic, pacific! The oral equivalent of navigating the deepest oceans of outer space. Thirteen minutes of filthy sound to ear action, lock up your daughters, and crack this mother up to twenty five a block.

SMACK!
CUT TO DARK MISERABLE BASEMENT WHERE WE SEE MURDOC BROADCASTING HIS RADIO SHOW.
24
SUDDEN IMPACT DRIVING SCHOOL
OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. 2-D standing by the FRONT DOOR
REVERSE SHOT. A BABOON IN A POSTMANS UNIFORM PASSES 2-D A LETTER

Unfortunately, it seemed as though the remaining Gorillaz weren't nearly as enthusiastic as their crackpot bassist…

February 27th 2012 *Murdoc, Russel & Noodle outside 212 Wobble Street, 8:05 PM*

Murdoc: Why've you whisked me out here then, you wanna borrow my lighter?

Russel: We're calling it quits, we can't stay here anymore, the cops will be here any day now for your ass, and I don't want to be here to witness it.

Murdoc: Russ, mate, you've only just shrank back to your normal size, what's the rush? Let's have a beer and talk this through at least.

Russel: Nah man, I've heard enough out of you, all you do is talk but nothing you say has any actual meaning.

Murdoc: You're cranky, I get it. Sleeping in the cold was bound to do that. There's a bed made for you, TV a-

Russel: Shut up! Shut the hell up! Like, Jesus Muds, can you not be a sarcastic prick for one minute in your goddamn life? Does everything that leaves your mouth have to be a joke?

Murdoc: No, I'm not…really I- just come back inside.

Russel: This is exactly why we're leaving man. I mean, 2D's been gone for days, we don't even have enough cash to keep our home. Seeing you like this…it's embarrassing. You look like you need a wheelchair.

Murdoc: So that's how it is now, huh? Right then, my comrade. Enough's-

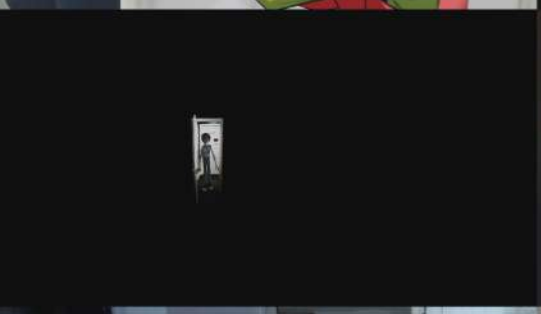
Russel: Now? This is how it's been for fourteen years. You dust off the same old speech you've been using for the past decade, every time we speak against you it's the exact same thing. No more, here's your final curtain call Muds.

Russel throws his drumsticks at Murdoc's feet as he begins to stomp off down the street.

SWEAT
COLLECTOR

SWEAT
COLLECTOR

SHOWER



THE FUNNIES

The Newspaper
HE SAW IT ON THE TELEVISION

DESTROY
THIS MAD BRUTE
ENLIST

212

NOTICE OF EVICTION

NOTICE OF EVICTION

Murdoc: (Shaking) You still want the bit about living a happy life? I don't need you, never have. WANKER!

Murdoc turns to Noodle, awkwardly slumped on the front step of 212.

Murdoc: At least you have some decency left, grab the amp, we're going jamming. Did it with just 2D last album I can do it with just you this time around if I have to.

Noodle kills her cigarette and stands up. Arching over the drunken piss-stained bassist which once stood as a parental figure.

Noodle: Put a shirt on before you get tackled.

Murdoc: What? Seriously? That's it? After all these years? That's all you have to say to me? "Put a shirt on"?...I made you, remember that. I MADE YOU!

Murdoc stands in awe as Noodle walks down the street, his ankle tag beeping and flashing red continuously…

February 29th 2012 *Do Ya Thing video is released*

Murdoc: February 29th…I say, that's rarer than a witch's third nipple. Leap years come about once every four years you know, but Gorillaz videos like this come once in a lifetime. So, here it is folks, in all its glory, it's the Ben-Hur of pop promos…have I said something like that already? I can't remember.

Over the course of several months, multiple interviews directed towards the now fractured Gorillaz were released questioning their status.

April 7th 2012 *Murdoc announced Gorillaz disbanding*

Murdoc said, for the first time publicly, that Gorillaz have fallen out and aren't speaking.
So are you and the rest of Gorillaz talking? Did you fall out?

Murdoc: Erm… well, that sounds very juvenile, doesn't it? But being juvenile about it, it happens. It's a shame. It's unlikely we will make more music. It seems the rest of them consider Gorillaz to be done...I think we were all at cross purposes somewhat last record, which is a shame. So until a time comes when that knot has been untied.

But you write all the music, surely you can do Gorillaz without the others?

Murdoc: Absolutely not, I'll try and continue making music without Gorillaz obviously, but under the Gorillaz heading…no way, not again. That's something we do together so I wouldn't dream of doing it overwise.

How do you feel about the four of you cutting ties?

Russel: Gorillaz has run its course for now, it doesn't mean it's packed away for good, though if we do anything again I would like it to be completely different. There were many projects we worked on that never saw the light of day that I think we could maybe dust off in the future.

So are Gorillaz finished?

Russel: No. That comes from an article which was an interesting take on a very long conversation. I don't know how we'll feel when we next play. Some days I feel one way and other days I feel the other. If you don't see something as a career but as an important part of your life, you don't know how you're going to feel about it. We only ever wanted to put on a great performance but nothing's been said between us about the beginning or the end.

Why did you walk out after Do Ya Thing's video?

2D: We've been inseparable for a long time, and sometimes it's good to have a break. We haven't fallen out, I just want to do some of my own stuff, and Murdoc usually has many projects - he's usually doing ten things at once - drinking, drugs, prozzies, stealing, murdering, scheming, scamming, lying, crying, bullying. So it's alright to separate for a bit and try different things. I don't think the lengths Murdoc went to last album for interesting visuals were working as well as they did previously. The music and videos weren't meshing as good together, and both were a nightmare to produce, but I think in retrospect we'd made a really good record, and at points…I was into it, when we played it I mean.

What have you been doing since you left London?

Noodle: I'm taking a couple of years off and am mainly learning to pearl dive and also practising my new-found love of meditation, living in Japan with my apprentice Chiyoko. When Murdoc and I have worked out our differences, I'm sure we'll make another record.

Will that be difficult?

Noodle: I don't think so. We've been through too much together for it to be that big of a mountain climb. We've just fallen out like bands do sometimes. I'm not the only person to fall out with their bassist then make up again - everyone does it.

Murdoc: So, what more to say, what a wonderful ride this has been, and what a special relationship we've enjoyed, with all the people at Converse. Shoes, music, videos, chocolates, rum…I could live like this forever, sadly they can't. So, as I understand it, I've been instructed to vacate this site immediately, before they set the dogs loose on me. I'd love to stay for a coffee, but uh, time and tide wait for no man. Right, ok, I think that's it. That's the track done, the info released, the video signed off on, chicks rescued, dragon slain, and the big ol' size nine cheque banked and cashed. The high octane white-knuckled ride of Gorillaz has taken a pause. While in my dotage I get time to reflect on my glorious career and plan my future mistakes. So are we closing the book on Gorillaz? Nah. I wouldn't close the book on anything. In essence, for me. It's just music making, whatever it is, I don't have to be doing that at the moment. What's happening, whatever is happening is what I'm into. So simply, I'm not closing the book on Gorillaz, I'm putting a bookmark in the book. I've put the book down, and I'm probably reading another at the moment. Right, I'm off down to marrakech to go teach parakeets to fly underwater. I got a big ol' camaro, a tank full of gas, half a pack of snout, a book on Rambo, two hundred bucks burning a hole in my jeans. What a trip, it's been lovely, but uh, here's to tomorrow, see you all down the road a piece, love you all forever and all that, always will. Thanks for all the fish, yours truly, madly, deeply. Sayonara boys and girls, Sayourna, Murdoc Niccals X Gorillaz. Pip pip, big kiss.

And with that, Murdoc pulls out from the now vacant 212 Wobble Street house in his 1969 'Stylo' Chevrolet Camaro for one last time. Speeding off down the street, as a gang of swat vans begin chasing after him, leading him into a dead end…

Interlude

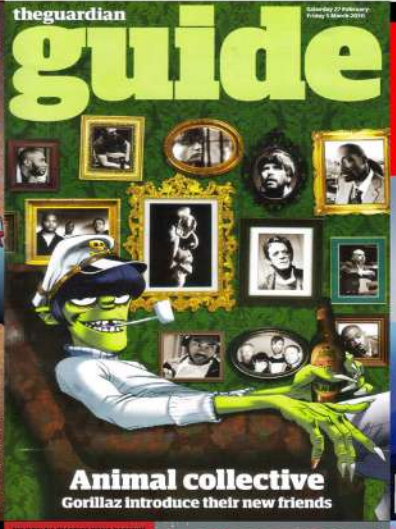
MARC ECKO'S
complex
the GORILLAZ celebrate our 8th anniversary!

NEIL YOUNG Plugs back in
cowbell
Animal Collective's AVEY TARE Mucks Around in Swampland
KYLESA Propels Metal Into Interstellar Overdrive
THE GREEN MIND GUIDE How To Sustain Yourself
Japan's Nattiest Haunted HOUSE
GORILLAZ
Take On Creators Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett
PLUS DARKSTAR, JULIE CHRISTMAS, POST-ROCK HEROES, ROBERT MITCHUM'S LIFE LESSONS & MORE

TROIS
COULEURS
80
GORILLAZ
PIRATE
LA RÉDAC

GORILLAZ
BIG BAND OF THE YEAR GO APE

WHITE STRIPES LAURA MARLING MUSE LCD SOUNDSYSTEM
NME
THE INTERNET VIRAL THAT'S GOT THE WORLD GUESSING
NEW FOALS ALBUM FIRST LISTEN!
REALITY BLURS!
DAMON INTERVIEWS GORILLAZ
KATE NASH: CORRUPTED BY THE CRIBS?
TWO DOOR CINEMA CLUB LADY GAGA HOT CHIP DARWIN DEEZ


theguardian
guide
Animal collective
Gorillaz introduce their new friends

THE UK'S BIGGEST MUSIC MAGAZINE
Q
EXCLUSIVE SUBSCRIBERS ONLY COVER
GORILLAZ
& A STAR-STUDDED CREW SET SAIL AGAIN

COLLECTOR'S MUSIC EDITION
Time Out
Beirut
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
DAMON ALBARN
JAMIE HEWLETT
KNOW MORE. DO MORE.
GORILLAZ

GORILLAZ // INVADER // LUCY SPARROW // TRISTAN EATON // AMY CUTLER
JUXTAPOZ
ART & CULTURE

THE WORLD'S GREATEST MUSIC MAGAZINE
Q
BLONDIE ATOMIC NEW 12-PAGE INTERVIEW
SPIRITUALIZED STILL FLOATING IN SPACE
FLEET FOXES DROP OUT AND CRACK UP
Damon Albarn Speaks!
GORILLAZ
"LET'S MAKE A PARTY RECORD FOR THE WORLD GOING NUTS!"
COLLECTOR'S COVER
CHARLATANS THUNDERCAT JOHN LYDON THE XX GLASS ANIMALS

THE RED BULLETIN
BEYOND THE ORDINARY
CHARLIE HUNNAM
FANTASTIC VOYAGE
"WE'RE THE MOST REAL BAND OUT THERE"
GORILLAZ!
FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

Tom Petty: 1950-2017
Liam se cobra venganza
REPORTE ESPECIAL
Jóvenes, trans y sin techo
El lado humano de Gorillaz
Damon Albarn se enfrenta al futuro que creó
Los Espíritus levantan vuelo
Cómo reinventar el secundario

spex
Magazin für Popkultur
+ CD mit 12 Songs
Future Islands
Thundercat
Dettmann & Klock
Bob Dylan
Wolfgang Tillmans
Feist
Schwerpunkt: FAKT, FAKE, FIKTION?
mit:
Twin Peaks
Des Rätsels Lösung
Laurie Anderson
Die Stimme der Wahrheit
Soziale Netzwerke
Es war einmal ein Arschloch
GORILLAZ
Echt jetzt?!

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Intel
Graham Fink
Steve Vranakis

CRACK
Gorillaz

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THE HUNT FOR CHOPIN'S PIANO
ART
WALDEMAR JANUSZCZAK ON ANIMAL MAGIC IN MARGATE
BOOKS
THE MANWHO SAVED FRANCE: MAX HASTINGS ON DE GAULLE
CULTURE
THE BOYZ ARE BACK
DAMON ALBARN AND JAMIE HEWLETT REUNITE FOR MORE GORILLAZ

Unfinished Monkey Business

'Right, Ok. Listen Gorillaz fans. So, I just re-surfaced from Hell, dusted all off all the burning coal, entrails, smoke, liver and sulphur from my cape and what do I find on my mantelpiece? A big, gaudy envelope with this inside:

'To Murdoc Niccals...Blah blah blah...You are cordially invited to attend the première of the fantastic new Chinese Opera Monkey: Journey To The West at London's most prestigious venue The Royal Opera House.'

Well, right, me and opera go together like Kylie and arse cheeks, so I thought OK. 'Could be good. Let's check it out...'

I'm always open to new ideas. I actually saw a very vivid performance of Wagner's 'Ring Cycle' recently, but that was a part of a triple-bill including a showing of "My Big Fat Greek Orgy", and also "Raiders of the Lost Arse" so I'm not sure any of them were strictly 'Opera', by the conventional definitions of the term. But the singing was pretty fantastic. And the aria in the middle brought tears to my eyes. And a strange swelling down below...

So anyway, I'm staring at this invite when I notice this wonderful little tell-tale sign scribbled in crayon at the bottom....

'...Brought to you from the creators of Gorillaz'

Ooohh...Tasty! Sounds like fighting talk to me. Now, you know I'm fond of a bottle of Rohypnol or two, but you'd think even I would remember putting together a 2-hour marathon bonanza spectacular sung in Mandarin, featuring acrobats, martial arts, plate-spinners, Chinese musicians, jugglers, fully 'coloured-in' animation, jaw-dropping aerial wire-work and that fucking idiot Mike Smith in the orchestra pit.

'From the creators of Gorillaz!?!' I didn't create this! So it sounded to me like the insidious and relentless credit-stealing work of that bilious, double act, 'Albarn and Hewlett' once more. Either that or Ronnie Barker had been raiding the dressing up box again...

I had to check this out... So, right, I knocked back a couple of purple hearts, zipped up my Cubans and hailed a black cab over to this 'groundbreaking extravaganza, 'from the creators of Gorillaz.' Let's meet my 'makers' next venture, huh?

I got to the Opera House and kinda shoved my way through a whole load of those dusty old opera folk, grabbed a big can of Sprite and then took my place on my plush velvet chair, awaiting the unveiling of this fantastic display of arts and crafts. 3 years in the making? Better be good then...

What I then witnessed, well, was just gob-smacking...

So here's the good news: Monkey: Journey to The West is incredible! It's incredible!!!

I was a bit half-cut when I went to see this thing, but there's people FLYING all over the place. It's unbelievable! I got the fright of my bleedin' life.

Actual... 'FLYING'... 'PEOPLE!'

猴 MONKEY
JOURNEY TO THE WEST

AN OPERA

CONCEIVED, WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY : **CHEN SHI-ZHENG**
COMPOSER : **DAMON ALBARN**
VISUAL CONCEPT, DESIGN & ANIMATION : **JAMIE HEWLETT**

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

24 | 26 July at 2.30pm 25 July at 4pm
23 July at 8pm 24 | 26 July at 7.30pm 25 July at 8.30pm

Box Office 020 7304 4000
For cast details and to book online visit **www.roh.org.uk**

I almost dropped my drink down this old geezer' back in front of me! And the music's the strangest thing I've ever heard. It's sung in this weird language. It's called 'Chine Neese', and it's wonderful. I mean, obviously it would be better if it was sung by say, Jello Biafra from The Dead Kennedys, but you do have to hear this stuff to believe it. It's all over the place!

This production is just bursting full of delights, and I'm a notoriously hard man to please. What are some of the highlights? Well, let's see... I don't want to ruin it but halfway through this fucking enormous hand comes out. Pow! Kinda, crushes Monkey underneath his big, podgy, godlike palm. Frightened the life out of me! My mind had wandered off momentarily at that point. For some reason I was thinking about pints of Strongbow and Girls Aloud, then... Wow! Thwaaappp!! 'Great Big Hand.'... Crazy stuff!

And there's more. The gymnastic displays are amazing! The stamina of this Monkey actor is incredible, almost up to my kinda standard. He's fighting, singing, flying…non-stop. I must find out where he gets his energy from...

Can I surprise you, kids? I like opera. Really. I've always liked opera, especially the intervals... Kurt Weill's 'Three-penny Opera', 'Porgy and Bess' by Gershwin. 'The Rake's Progress' by Stravinsky's not half bad too. Anything by Puccini, Verdi or the fat one out of Take That. Gilbert & Sullivan's "Mikado"'s always gonna work for me. Then you've got dear old Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries". Great stuff...

But this 'Monkey King' thing's different. Very different. Uuurrrrpppp!!.....It's not even strictly an opera, it takes on a whole load of elements; musical, cabaret, animations, circus skills, some clown action... and more. It's whole new bag all together...

Anyway, about halfway through I got a strange tingly feeling all over me…It might have been the medication I've been on or even or that cheeky toot of 'Mum and Dad' I had before the start, but... but... mmm... but then it hit me... I knew why this seemed so familiar.

Monkey King IS a Chinese version of Gorillaz!!!

I'm watching this awesome display unfold when it hit me like a 200-ton weight upon my pretty bonce. This is a circus-musical, animated operatic performance blah, blah blah... in which the stars are... a Chinese doppelganger-troupe based on none other than my own platinum selling band Gorillaz! The bloody cheek of it!!

Think about it, right.

There's the fat, stupid one on drums Pigsy. He's the spit of Russel, never more than three feet from a bucket of chicken. Just a loafer really. Then you've got Tripitaka, who's basically Gorillaz' very own Noodle... Softly spoken, young, gentle and full of 'spiritual enlightenment', all that old rubbish.

You've got Sandy, who's just a vacuous plank, doesn't seem very integral to the plot at all as far as I can see, much like our singer 2D and then to top it all off, and this is the real sucker punch…. Monkey is ME!!

The main character, the star, is a cheeky, ball-scratching loon; a genius with maybe a slight touch of arrogance, well-dressed, handsome and someone who believes he's the king of the whole universe. Through his courage, skill, strength and charisma he leads the four of them around the world and ultimately to their very own salvation and spiritual enlightenment. It's his leadership ultimately provides them with immortality and the keys to the world... Sounds familiar, doesn't it?!!
IT'S A CHINESE VERSION OF MEEE!!!!

That shook me up something proper, I can tell you. I almost spilled my Royal Opera House pop-corn... I considered suing China for copyright infringement, when I realised that Monkey King is a 16th Century Chinese text, so possibly they could claim they came first, but still...It's a rip off of me and Gorillaz. Deffo.

Being an adult though, I decided for the sake of my own sanity to overlook the obvious comparisons, and the rather surreal supposition that I might just be watching a Chinese extension of myself steal my own thunder in front of my eyes...

So once I calmed down, I got a chance to really soak in the whole glamorous, ambitious production. To really take on board what I was experiencing... And truly, it is a joy to behold, a feast for the eyes and a banquet for the soul.

The whole show climaxes with the familiar foursome finally arriving in Paradise. This big Buddha bloke rewards the diligence and courage of the four heroes by elevating them into honourable and respected positions, "from lowly mortals into an almost mythic state". Quite impressive. Basically what I did for the other members of Gorillaz.

So what's my 'Murdoc Niccals' great, big verdict??

It's a breath-taking piece of work, and for me that's really saying something.

SO. Bottom line is this folks. If you like Gorillaz, (and who doesn't?), you're going to LOVE this. I mean, yes, it should have been me as the main character, but still. Not bad at all... Actually, in reality though I've got to admit, in my heart of heart, the real reason I like opera is more to do with the fact that I can swan about in capes, waving my walking cane, while being slightly vacant on a heady 'Brompton's cocktail' of opium, laudanum, absinthe and port. Now a narrative thrills me, but the high pitched voices give me nothing but back-ache, so normally I wear headphones...

Right. That's that one finished. So gotta dash, folks. 'Chinese-Western, cross-cultural multi-genre, mash-ups' are all well and good in their place, but I've just recorded an entire episode of 'Girls Aloud: Exposed' on Sky plus and, see, that type of programme is always gonna come first in my book.

Oh yeah. One other thing. This thing's got a website. www.monkeyjourneytothewest.com

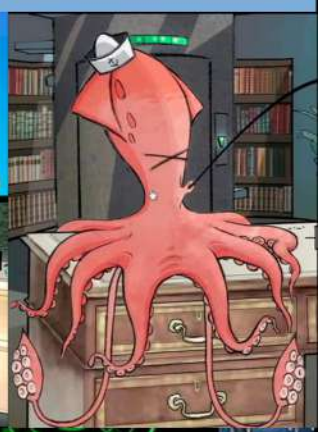
If you listened to a word I just said, you'll check it out...

'Almost as good as Gorillaz...'

Ciao for now…'

- Murdoc's Monkey Review, The Official Gorillaz Fansite, September 2008

09:14



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BIG RICK BLACK'S
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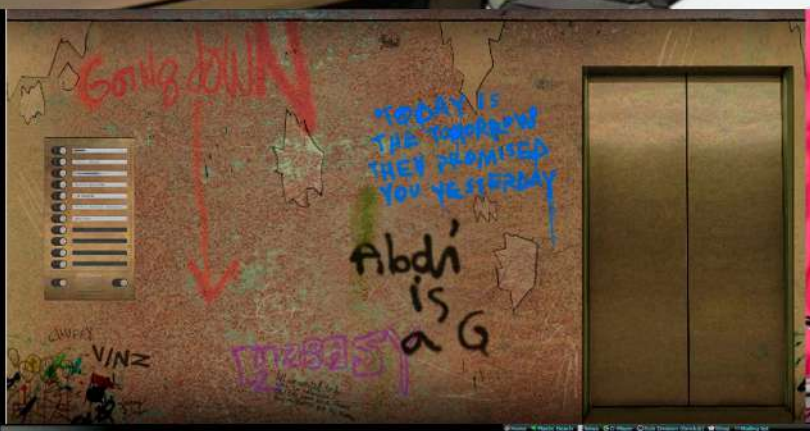
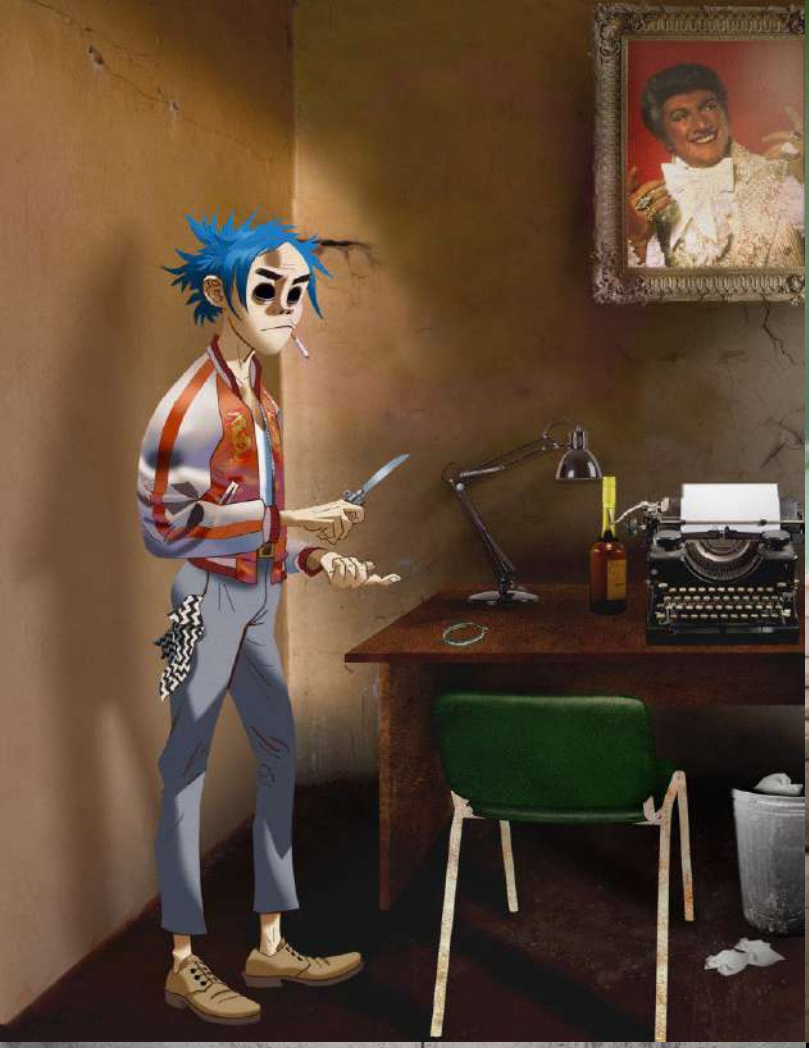
Plastic Beach
Picture


GOING DOWN
TODAY IS THE TOMORROW THEY PROMISED YOU YESTERDAY
Abdi is a G
VINZ

STUDY - STUDIO
MASTER BEDROOM
ENTRANCE
2D's Room



GORILLAZ
WARFIELD

VOICEMAIL

Gorillaz Sound System

Once upon a time, the Earth was ruled by manufactured pop and chaos reigned. From the chaos came Gorillaz: four intrepid heroes united as one, come to save us all...and following along behind, carrying the record box and wearing the headphones, came Gorillaz Sound System, the world's premier audio-visual party experience! Providing toe-tapping tunes and eye-popping Gorillaz visuals, G.S.S. is guaranteed to make any party go with a swing. The hard-dancing partygoers at a G.S.S. bash are the only recommendation they need, but this lot also come with bona fide celebrity endorsement:

Murdoc: G.S.S. are the only people I'd trust to entertain my amigos apart from myself. The way I look at it, this is kinda like the Pope giving his blessing to another parish. And anyway I can't get the records out of those little paper cases, my nails are too long.

If you have a party problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find them; maybe you can hire...The G-Team!

Gorillaz Sound System was a project fronted by Remi Kabaka Jr. from 2008 - 2015, briefly reappearing at Demon Dayz Festival 2017. GSS was a state-of-the-art audio-visual 4-man outfit incorporating all the hugely successful Gorillaz hits coupled with outsized projections of their award winning animation. GSS consisted of a DJ, a Percussionist, a Drummer and a Visual Director - with live mixing, remixing and percussion. Their lineup originally consisted of Remi, DJ Kofi, DJ Guy C, Jodo and Nelson De Freitas.

Gorillaz Sound System did absolutely no press, not even widely publicising their lineup. Whilst there were isolated reports of punters being disappointed to find out they weren't actually going to see a full Gorillaz show, overall reviews and bloggers' responses tended to range from the lukewarm to the very positive.

GORILLAZ
SOUND SYSTEM
DJ SET

house

GORILLAZ
SOUND SYSTEM DJ SET

illegalbreaks

10.01 SOPOT / SFINKS700
11.01 KATOWICE / MEGA CLUB
17.01 POZNAŃ / SQ
18.01 WARSZAWA / BASEN

OZKROKA rbl.tv muno LAIF trojmiasto.pl

Discography

DSIDES

Release Date: 19/11/07
Cat Number: 50999 510545 2 6 / TOCP-66746-7
Formats: 2 x CD / 2 x Cassette / 3 x LP
UK Chart Position: 63
US Chart Position: 71

Tracklisting:
CD ONE
1. 68 State
2. People
3. Hongkongaton
4. We Are Happy Landfill
5. Hong Kong
6. Highway (Under Construction)
7. Rockit
8. Bill Murray
9. The Swagga
10. Murdoc Is God
11. Spitting Out The Demons
12. Don't Get Lost In Heaven (Original Demo Version)
13. Stop The Dams

Japan Bonus Tracks:
14. Samba At 13
15. Film Trailer Music

CD TWO
1. DARE (DFA Remix)
2. Feel Good Inc. (Stanton Warriors Remix)
3. Kids With Guns (Jamie T's Turns To Monsters Remix)
4. DARE (Soulwax Remix)
5. Kids With Guns (Hot Chip Remix)
6. El Mañana (Metronomy Remix)
7. DARE (Junior Sanchez Remix)
8. Dirty Harry (Schtung Chinese New Year Remix)
9. Kids With Guns (Quiet Village Remix)

DSIDES - LTD EDITION

Cat Number: 510 5582

Further info: Comes in a special package with picture cards, stickers, pins and a sewed patch.

Stylo

Release Date: 26/01/10
Cat Number: STYLO 100 / 101 / PCD-3518
Formats: Download / CD / 12"

Tracklisting:
1. Stylo (Radio Edit)
2. Stylo (Album Version)
3. Stylo (Instrumental)

Further info: It was first leaked as an MP3 download, then officially uploaded to Youtube and later made available in a Promo 12" and a Japan only CD Single.

PLASTIC BEACH

Release Date: 08/03/10
Cat Number: 50999 627547 2 9
Formats: ECD / 2 x LP / 2 x PIC LP

Tracklisting:
1. Orchestral Intro
2. Welcome To The World Of The Plastic Beach
3. White Flag
4. Rhinestone Eyes
5. Stylo
6. Superfast Jellyfish
7. Empire Ants
8. Glitter Freeze
9. Some Kind Of Nature
10. On Melancholy Hill
11. Broken
12. Sweepstakes
13. Plastic Beach
14. To Binge
15. Cloud Of Unknowing
16. Pirate Jet

PLASTIC BEACH - JAPAN EDITION

Release Date: 03/03/10
Cat Number: TOCP-66951
Bonus Track: Pirate's Progress

PLASTIC BEACH - EXPERIENCE EDITION

Release Date: 08/03/10
Cat Number CD: 50999 627827 0 8
Cat Number DVD: 50999 626127 9 9

Further info: DVD includes "The Making Of Plastic Beach" Documentary. Directed by: Sebastian Monk.
Japanese Experience Edition CD includes additional Bonus Track Pirate's Progress.

PLASTIC BEACH - iTUNES EDITION

UK Chart Position: 2
US Chart Position: 2
Bonus tracks: Pirate's Progress &
Three Hearts, Seven Seas, Twelve Moons

Further info: Digital Download includes interactive app and digital booklet.

Superfast Jellyfish
Release Date: 30/03/10
Cat Number: JELLYFISH 001 / 50999 629583 2 5
Formats: CD
Tracklisting:
1. Superfast Jellyfish (Album Version)
2. Superfast Jellyfish (Instrumental)

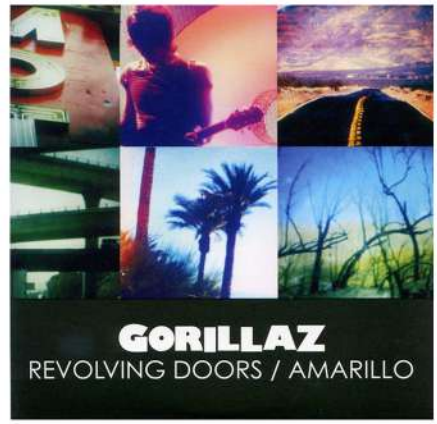
White Flag
Release Date: 17/04/10
Cat Number: 10R 6802 / 50999 629586 1 5
Formats: LTD 10"
Tracklisting:
1. White Flag
2. Pirate's Progress
Further info: Ltd Edition of 1000 copies released for Record Store Day 2010.

Rhinestone Eyes
Release Date: 12/06/10
Cat Number: 509996 29571 2 0
Formats: CD
Tracklisting:
1. Rhinestone Eyes (Album Version)
2. Rhinestone Eyes (Instrumental)
Further info: Very limited US release due to the cancellation of the single and future promotional video.

On Melancholy Hill
Release Date: 25/07/10
Cat Number: MELANCHOLY 001 / 50999 629585 2 3
Formats: CD
UK Chart Position: 78
Tracklisting:
1. On Melancholy Hill (Radio Edit)
2. On Melancholy Hill (Album Version)
3. On Melancholy Hill (Instrumental)

Doncamatic
Release Date: 22/11/10
Cat Number: CDR 6827 / 5099994762525
Formats: CD / PIC 7"
UK Chart Position: 37
Tracklisting:
1. Doncamatic
2. Doncamatic (The Joker Remix)
Futher info: 7" includes Empire Ants (Paul Harris & Paul Rogers Vocal Mix). There's also a Promotional release that includes an Instrumental version.

THE FALL
Release Date: 25/12/10 (Digital) / 16/04/11 (Vinyl) / 18/04/11 (CD)
Cat Number: 5099909758827 / 5099909758810 / TOCP-66952
Formats: Download / CD / LP
UK Chart Position: 12
US Chart Position: 24
Tracklisting:
1. Phoner To Arizona
2. Revolving Doors
3. Hilbilly Man
4. Detroit
5. Shy-town
6. Little Pink Plastic Bags
7. The Joplin Spider
8. The Parish Of Space Dust
9. The Snake In Dallas
10. Amarillo
11. The Speak It Mountains
12. Aspen Forest
13. Bobby In Phoenix
14. California & The Slipping Of The Sun
15. Seattle Yodel
Further info: First vinyl released in numbered copies on Record Store Day. Japanese version includes exclusive map poster of the American tour.



Revolving Doors / Amarillo
Release Date: 14/03/11
Cat Number: 50999 098315 2 0
Formats: CD
US Chart Position: 34
Tracklisting:
1. Revolving Doors
2. Amarillo
Further info: Promotional CD, few copies exist.

THE SINGLES COLLECTION 2001-2011

Release Date: 28/11/11
Cat Number: 5099973008026 / P730 0792 / P730 0781 / P730 0787
Formats: CD / CD + DVD / LTD 2 x LP / LTD 8 x 7"

Tracklisting:
1. Tomorrow Comes Today
2. Clint Eastwood
3. 19-2000
4. Rock The House
5. Feel Good Inc.
6. DARE
7. Dirty Harry
8. Kids With Guns
9. El Mañana
10. Stylo
11. Superfast Jellyfish
12. On Melancholy Hill
13. Doncamatic
14. Clint Eastwood (Ed Cas/Sweetie Irie Refix)
15. 19-2000 (Soulchild Remix)

Further info: Japanese edition includes Bonus Tracks Feel Good Inc. (Noodle's Demo) & Stylo (Labrinth SNES Remix). DVD features all Music Videos except for Lil' Dub Chefin' & Rockit, plus Live performances of Clint Eastwood, Dirty Harry, Kids With Guns & Superfast Jellyfish, the Charts Of Darkness Documentary and Bonus Trailers. Ltd 8 x 7" version features a modified tracklist to best suit the multi-single format.

DoYaThing

Release Date: 23/02/12
Cat Number: 50999 463778 1 4
Formats: LTD CD / LTD SS 10"

Tracklisting:
1. DoYaThing (Radio Edit)
2. DoYaThing (Full-Length)

Further info: Ltd Single Sided 10" released for Record Store Day 2012 exclusively as 500 copies for UK and 500 for US.

HUMANZ

Release Date: 28/04/17
Cat Number: 0190295851200 / 0190295851170 / WPCR-17835-6
Formats: CD / LTD 2 x CD / 2 x LP / 2 x PIC LP DLX LTD 14 x 12"
UK Chart Position: 2
US Chart Position: 2

Tracklisting:
1. Intro: I Switched My Robot Off
2. Ascension
3. Strobelite
4. Saturnz Barz
5. Momentz
6. Interlude: The Non-Conformist Oath
7. Submission
8. Charger
9. Interlude: Elevator Going Up
10. Andromeda
11. Busted And Blue
12. Interlude: Talk Radio
13. Carnival
14. Let Me Out
15. Interlude: Penthouse
16. Sex Murder Party
17. She's My Collar
18. Interlude: The Elephant
19. Hallelujah Money
20. We Got The Power

Deluxe Bonus Tracks:
21. Interlude: New World
22. The Apprentice
23. Halfway To The Halfway House
24. Out Of Body
25. Ticker Tape
26. Circle Of Friendz

Further info: Japanese edition includes 2 Bonus Tracks, Andromeda (D.R.A.M. Special) & Busted And Blue (Faia Younan Special).
Four singles were released digitally prior to the album's release, using the same cover art variants for each character.

Saturnz Barz
Release Date: 23/03/17
Cat Number: WW-190295824273_00_000
UK Chart Position: 87

Ascension
Release Date: 23/03/17
Cat Number: WW-190295824280_00_000
UK Chart Position: 91

Andromeda
Release Date: 23/03/17
Cat Number: WW-190295824266_00_000

We Got The Power
Release Date: 23/03/17
Cat Number: WW-190295824259_00_000

HUMANZ SUPER DELUXE LTD BOX SET

Release Date: 03/11/17
Cat Number: 0190295818845 / 0190295842932
Bonus Tracks: Long Beach, Colombians, Duetz, Midnite Float, Grilling With His Face, Charger (Pauline Black Special), Andromeda (D.R.A.M. Special), Busted And Blue (Faia Younan Special), Carnival (2D Special), Five Whales In A Dream, Garage Palace, She's My Collar (Kali Uchis Spanish Special), Phoenix On The Hill & Tranzformer.

Further info: Each of the 14 records is coloured differently and housed in folders with distinctive art. Includes a 54-page hardcover book with art. Initial copies were sold signed through the official website.

Strobelite

Release Date: 04/08/17
Cat Number: 0190295751388
Formats: Download only

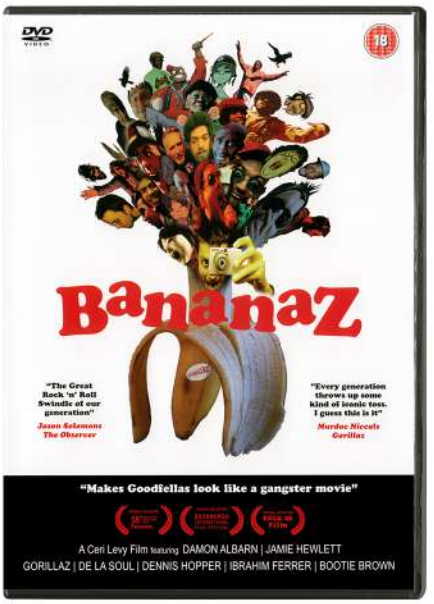
Further info: A physical release was planned but ultimately cancelled as a last minute decision.

Humility
Release Date: 31/05/18
Cat Number: 190295 615758 / PCD-1211
Formats: Download / CD
UK Chart Position: 81
US Chart Position: 85
Further info: Available for Download as a pre-save bonus. CD Promo available only in Japan.

Tranz
Release Date: 14/09/18
Formats: Download / Streaming

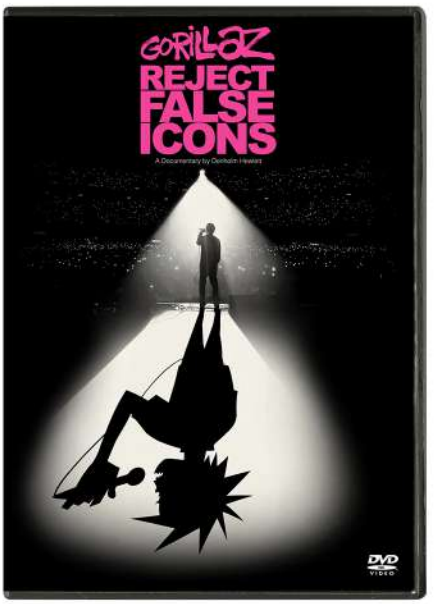
iTunes Session
Release Date: 22/10/10
Cat Number: 400017270
Formats: Download / Streaming
Tracklisting:
1. Clint Eastwood
2. Dirty Harry
3. Feel Good Inc.
4. Kids With Guns
5. Stylo
6. Glitter Freeze
7. On Melancholy Hill
8. Rhinestone Eyes
9. iTunes Interview with 2D & Murdoc

Pirate Radio
Release Date: 2010 - 2011
Cat Number: 1100558
Formats: Download / Streaming
Further info: Series of 5 episodes of Pirate Radio takeovers by Murdoc.


DVD
VIDEO
18
Bananaz
"The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle of our generation"
Jason Solomons
The Observer
"Every generation throws up some kind of iconic tosh. I guess this is it"
Murdoc Niccols
Gorillaz
"Makes Goodfellas look like a gangster movie"
A Ceri Levy Film featuring DAMON ALBARN | JAMIE HEWLETT
GORILLAZ | DE LA SOUL | DENNIS HOPPER | IBRAHIM FERRER | BOOTIE BROWN

Bananaz - Documentary
Release Date: 29/05/09
Cat Number: 9650109
Formats: Streaming / DVD

THE NOW NOW
Release Date: 29/06/18
Cat Number: 0190295643430 / 0190295643423 190295565282 / 0190295643416 / 0190295600150 / WPCR-18062
Formats: CD / LP / LTD LP / PIC LP / Cassette
UK Chart Position: 5
US Chart Position: 4
Tracklisting:
1. Humility
2. Tranz
3. Hollywood
4. Kansas
5. Sorcererz
6. Idaho
7. Lake Zurich
8. Magic City
9. Fire Flies
10. One Percent
11. Souk Eye
Further info: Ltd LP with lenticular cover includes 2D's Diary, 4 12" Prints, 6 Pins & Digital Download.



Reject False Icons - Documentary
Release Date: 16/12/19
Cat Number: 8556210
Formats: Streaming / LTD DVD

E
810
210
210

Chapter 7
The Making of Humanz

'Waiting for the world to start… again
'Cause we're working through it
Working through your nightmare
Watch the worker bees
As they're working for it
Working through the night shift'

Murdoc Niccals and the Heavy Seas – Live at the De De De Der

Following the highly publicised falling out of Gorillaz, it seemed impossible that the fearless four would ever reunite to produce another record together. Murdoc was locked up in prison (nothing's changed), Noodle was hiding in the shadows of Japan on some lame mission (again), Russel was crashing at a collaborators house (this is just getting lazy now), and 2D? Ah, I couldn't be bothered to find out what he was up to, probably harassing mushrooms. Yet despite the odds stacked against them, after Murdoc was placed on parole in late 2014, it seemed like Gorillaz would be making another triumphant return to tackle the politics of our modern world…

Murdoc: What was prison like? Pfft. It was Hell. Absolute Hell. Mind you, I got to know a few interesting people in there. The best bit of advice I got, and you'd do well to take this on board, was when you get put down, 'get your nut down and do your bird.'

Two years after the infamous Wobble Street fallout, deep beneath Abbey Road's zebra crossing, Murdoc stood at the bars of his cell, eagerly waiting for the guard to unlock the door.

Murdoc: You know, I've been in prison mate, that's where I've been. Yeah, I didn't do it guv, honestly - I did not, I did, do it. No. You gotta do your bird, get your nut down, do your bird, get out and live a straight life, and that's what I've done. I did nine moon in the high security jail underneath Abbey Road studios, built to detain the label's 'Artists in Breach of Contract'. You wouldn't have heard of it before, it's this huge conspiracy. I'm the only one to have ever been released, but I can brag 'cos they need me alive. You see, one day I was pulled aside by some bloke who represented Entertainment Internal Affairs. Apparently, right, like an unloved goldfish, the music industry was going down the toilet.

Murdoc: The world was in dire need of my legendary song-writing prowess. So with a few papers signed, I agreed to write a new album in exchange for a parole and a carton of Lucky Lungs. When I was being released from prison, one of the guards handed me this poster to sign. Only problem - it had nothing to do with me or Gorillaz; it was for a Damon Albarn show at the Royal Albert Hall. DO I LOOK LIKE DAVE ROWNTREE TO YOU, MATE? Abbey Road was hired to record the shows for some kind of live album or something. The guard probably figured I was being released to act as some kind of surprise special guest. Well, there'll be a surprise appearance for someone, alright.

Murdoc immediately moved into a recording studio based in West London, Studio 13, without informing anyone prior.

Murdoc: Listen. If Damon's gonna play my songs, use my demos, and continue riding off the success of doing vocals for my live shows five years ago, the least he can do is put a roof over my head and throw in a couple sessions. This place is quite nice actually; very slick, and oddly familiar, too. Reminds me of Kong in a lot of ways, only more compact.

November 16th 2014 *Damon Albarn and The Heavy Seas perform at the Royal Albert Hall*

Murdoc stayed at Studio 13 with Damon in the weeks building up to the Royal Albert Hall concert. Upon arrival, Murdoc noticed he wasn't the only Gorillaz plus one. Jeff Wooton had in fact brought Russel Hobbs with him after letting him crash on his futon for a few days.

Murdoc: I was afraid this would happen…

Russel: I actually hadn't met Jeff until after Gorillaz had split up. I knew he was associated with us though, being part of the live band for the Plastic Beach tour. He told me loads of stories of that whole tour, like 2D attempting to crowd surf at Glastonbury and falling flat on his face. None of the audience even recognised him. I'd just come back from the States, got really into boxing over there, and it helped me get back into shape. Jeff offered to let me crash on his futon for a few days until I could get a place of my own sorted. He told me about him still working with Damon, performing our music like a tribute act along with some of Damon's solo work and a couple of Blur hits. It sounded good, got invited down to see them play at the Royal Albert Hall and even gave them a hand setting up.

During the show's after-party at a club, the former bandmates awkwardly avoided speaking or making eye contact with each other. Eventually Damon and Jamie left the booth, leaving the two of them alone. The tension between them was almost unbearable. Murdoc took a nice long swig of rum and coke before slamming the glass back down on the table, breathing short fast bursts, gasping for air after slugging down his beverage. Russel glared at his former bassist curiously.

Russel: Mixing it with coke now, huh? Either you're being more sensible or prison's sent you back into your twenties.

Murdoc let out a single dry chuckle before interlocking his fingers, resting his elbows on the wet glass table.
Seconds, minutes, hours passed, until finally…

Murdoc: Do you want to do another one?

Russel: ...Do you?

Murdoc: Do you?

Russel: Yeah.

Murdoc: Okay. I'll call you.

Murdoc slung his coat over his shoulder and wandered off into the crowd. A few days later, Jeff's phone rang - it was Murdoc. Without delay Russel moved into Murdoc's new West London studio.

Russel: I think the gig got us both a bit nostalgic. They opened up with one of our B-sides, 'Spitting Out The Demons', and it seems Murdoc was weirdly impressed by this new dude, the bassist, Seye Adelekan. Apparently he was taught by Paul Simonon himself, so I guess it was just the next natural step. It was a real trip down memory lane. 'Slow Country' was on there at some point, too. Gave me the itch to do something with the others again. Murdoc and I both knew that we didn't have any real interest in being friends again, it was just about the music. Always has been.

ABOVE
Murdoc and The Heavy Seas hostile takeover
"You can't deny what happened that night, right?"
MURDOC NICCALS

The band was getting back together.

The Chronicles of Noodle

Murdoc: Please, do not read this section under any circumstances. Skip to the next section.

Russel: Shut up.

Murdoc: We need to stop this-

Russel: I said shut up, man.

Three years prior to Murdoc's release from prison, Noodle returned to Japan to live with Chiyoko as her apprentice. She was a natural (having shared a tour bus with Murdoc, she was really good at holding her breath). One day, deep beneath the waves, Noodle prized open a pearl shell of unearthly size, accidentally releasing an ancient hell demon. It scarpered, ready to party like it's 1499. Upon returning home, Noodle armed herself with her katana and searched through several scrolls inscribed with spidery script and woodblock prints of ghastly creatures.

Noodle: Maazu. The shapeshifter. My only chance was to stop it then, before it amassed too much power. It was tough, looking around at the bay beyond the terrace, the tiled rooftops which ran down the hillside to the ocean like giant steps… it was just beginning to feel like home, and now I had to leave.

Chiyoko gifted Noodle with a bird named Hato to help guide her, and also with the knowledge that Maazu must be decapitated in order to be killed. Along with her newfound companion

Hato, Noodle journeyed for two days, clambering over mountains and through ravines with rock walls as high as Tokyo skyscrapers. Oh, and did we mention the bird could talk?

Murdoc: You've gotta be fucking kidding me. Not this tripe again.

The pair landed beneath the mountain in a vast underground cavern. Noodle reached for her sword, narrowing her eyes. She could make out a shadow in the deep void, but the scale of it didn't make sense… and it was covered with strange red lights. Hundreds of them, in neat pairs, seemed to be corkscrewing towards her. Something was coming. Something huge, and the pair suspected it to be Maazu.

Murdoc: Well, we all know it wasn't, can we fast forward this a bit?

Fine. The beast wasn't Maazu, it was the bird.

Murdoc: Wait. Maazu was the talking bird? Fuck off! I HATE talking animals. Looking at you, Seth. And you're wondering why we mever got greenlit for that Netflix series. Jesus.

2D: So the bird was the demon this whole time?.

Noodle: No, it'd just stolen Hato's form

2D: Where's he now?

Murdoc: Dead, one can only hope.

For years Noodle pursued Maazu across Japan, from the heights of Mt Fuji to Tokyo, where it had risen to the top of the criminal underworld.

Noodle: It seems as though the death of Malthus had left some boots to be filled, and they were there for the taking.

Murdoc: What did he flog?

Noodle: Guns, to my knowledge.

Murdoc: You're ripping off my nemesis, you know that, right? Next you'll be saying he had a henchman with a gas mask for a face.

Noodle: Well…

Murdoc: You're joking, aren't you? Please don't tell me that's true.

Disguising herself as a geisha, Noodle infiltrated its debauched headquarters, the Demon's Lodge. And there, while Maazu was distracted by a heated bout of 'Drink While You Think,' she lopped off its head. Its Earthly existence was over. And the carpet was ruined.

Noodle: In the heat of battle, I kept my head and fought bravely. It didn't. So now I have its head. On a shelf next to my Hello Kitty alarm clock (vintage, quite valuable). I put a red bulb in the mouth, kind of like a lava lamp. It's a conversation starter.

Murdoc: You know, the amount of times you've lopped some poor sods head off and mounted it onto the wall or the kitchen table, if I didn't know better I'd say you've developed some kind of fetish for this sort of thing.

Noodle: I-

Murdoc: Ah ah ah. I want no part in this.

Escaping Maazu's Sumo bodyguards, Noodle packed herself into a FedEx crate with dried fish, bottled water, and a copy of Moby Dick - if she was ever to finish Melville's onerous classic, it was now.

Her package was addressed: West London, England - c/o Murdoc Niccals

January 29th 2015 *Noodle reunites with Gorillaz… fourth time lucky?*

Murdoc: That's it? No villains arc this time around? That's a bit shit.

Russel: No more trouble man. You want us in on this, we're taking things back to basics.

2D: Can I ask, what's the deal with all these FedEx crates?

Murdoc: Knock it off, Seinfeld.

With Noodle's return, all that remained was the arrival of their frontman. Unsurprisingly, it took 2D an extensive amount of time to conjure up the motivation needed to work with Murdoc once more.

2D: For the past six months or so I was on a silent retreat in the Himalayas. I heard Gorillaz was getting back together, and that's sorta the thing that pushed me to do it in the first place. I felt like I needed to prepare myself for seeing Murdoc again, so he wouldn't get to me as much this time around. I wanted to make sure that this time I'd be able to defend myself if need be- not like punching wise, Russel would back me up for that, I just mean getting my wits about me and being able to stand up to him again.

2D planned to stay on his silent retreat for an entire year to get into the headspace needed to work with Murdoc once more, alas, after only half of his planned time, 2D was excommunicated from his group of monks for talking too much.

2D: It was nice to reconnect with my Tibetan roots. I did try on Plastic Beach with Noodle for a while but the Ocean just freaked me out too much. I felt I was ready either way, I wasn't gonna let him push me around anymore. This is my band just as much as his, and I deserved to be respected!

July 29th 2015 *2D reunites with Gorillaz*

2D waltzed into Studio 13 with his chest puffed up and a spring in his step, ready to confront his decade-long abuser.

Murdoc: Hello, 2D! My, have you grown, and the spiky blue hair, god I've missed it! It's er, thinning a bit, but it still looks great.

Murdoc's breathing freezes as he blankly stares directly into 2D's blackened eyes. After around four seconds, Murdoc raises his finger and presses it onto Stu's forehead, only to instantly be slapped away by the heightened vocalist.

2D: Stop it, Murdoc!

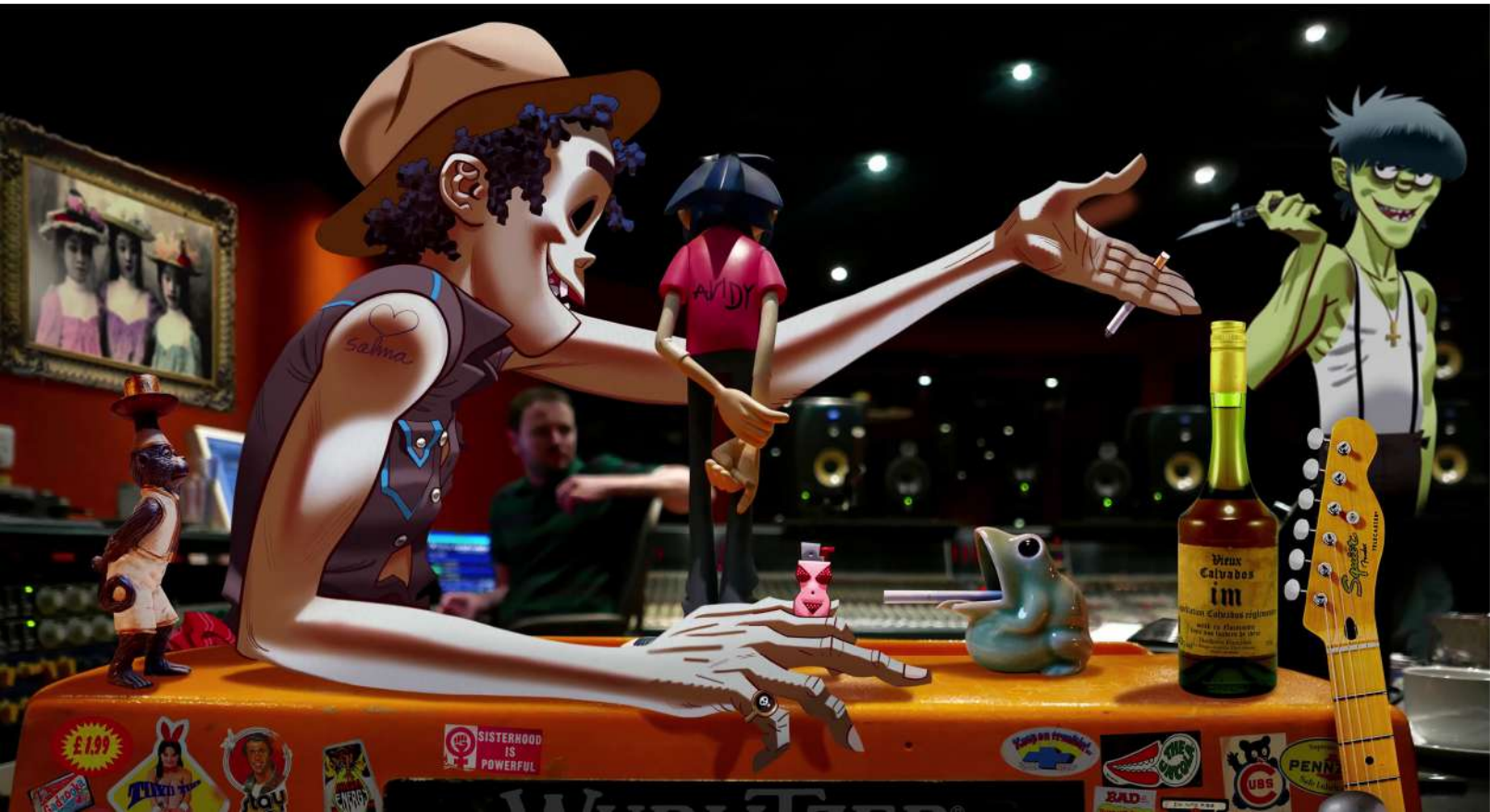
Murdoc: Mhm, see, there it is, all that negative energy flowing back in. You're the problem.

Murdoc swaggers off down the hallway sloped at an angle with his arms drooping beside him, almost as if his muscles had perished.

Murdoc: There's about six hundo muscles in the human body…

2D: Okay?

Murdoc: Yeah. You're welcome.



The Reunion

Following The Heavy Sea's Everyday Robots performance in London, Russel and Murdoc moved into Albarn's Studio 13 pos haste. While Murdoc got to work getting all the band's equipment shipped over, Russel began conjuring up demos for what would eventually materialise into the next Gorillaz album.

Russel: With Gorillaz reconvening in recent years, it's no wonder that, thematically, I wanted this next record to be as intense as it is surreal. Demon Days reflected a dark world rocked by avarice and conflict; Plastic Beach, though more upbeat, was inspired by Murdoc's consternation at the levels of plastic in the ocean, the pathos of new consumer detritus ecologies. It initially started out with my concepts, Murdoc added some things here and there, then when Noodle came she added her ideas, and finally when 2D came he added stuff from his own brain. All these different ideas and emotions the four of us had built up over the past few years acted as the basis for the album. I started it off, then bit by bit the rest added their contributions.

Prior to studio recording, 2D made use of his iPad once more, using applications such as GarageBand to create the framework for each song.

2D: Russel and I would sit down, he'd show me the ideas, and I'd use GarageBand to try and mirror what he was going for. I'll demo anything that gets the ball rolling: a guitar/vocal recording, chord patterns, synth parts, a loop, beats, and so on.

Murdoc: God help us.

How did it feel seeing the man who'd kidnapped you and held you captive the album prior once more?

2D: Erm, not as violent as I expected, I'm a bit concerned actually. I don't really know what's got into Murdoc to be the way he is. I think maybe he hit the drinking a bit too hard after getting out of jail. I'm surprised he hasn't pulled a Mark E. Smith on us and pulled out a wheelchair and a pissing pouch, or something.

Russel: It's almost as if the man's gone senile. He's got this really freaky wonky eye that creeps the hell outta me, and he can't seem to ever stand up straight.

Noodle: I'd say that Murdoc's lost it, but he's actually a lot easier to work with this way. If it keeps us out of trouble then, well, who am I to interfere?

Murdoc: We'ves got to do a fifth album, right? Cos otherwise (pauses for breath) the whole thing's gonna go to hell in a handcart, or something. I, I-I got this tiny little mouse who lives in my trouser pocket, and I call him Cheeserz with a z because we're the Gorillaz.

And you're okay with taking a backseat on leading this record?

Murdoc: After our last outing, maybe they don't want us as vocal this time around, and you know who I mean…Jamion…or maybe they do. Who knows? But I'll tell you as a fact right here. Right now. A LOT of what I said in the rest of this book is totally missing…feels like a part of me is gone, left on the island. Like we've forgotten something or- or someone, only…only nobody's missing. Weird…

2D: He hasn't been the same since then, really. It's strange; in a way, I'm sorta doing what he had to do in the first album, taking care of this broken, damaged shell of a person. It's quite sad, but don't tell him that. He still thinks he's in his 30's.

Russel: It didn't feel like we were in the spirit of Gorillaz as much post-Demon Days. We were all off doing our own thing, and none of us even really worked together in the same room for our last single. This was sort of like a second chance at life for us creatively as a group, mainly because Murdoc had no brains left to say otherwise - he never came out of that hole he found himself in at Wobble Street, though it's probably for the best. At least this way he can't hurt nobody.

2D: It's interesting being back with the others, but it can be weird sometimes - like when Russel gets cranky because the sound of something for a track isn't how he imagines it in his head, or when Murdoc starts having fits of fear after watching telly. Some people dream of being in a band, but I'm a bit more ambitious. My dream is to someday lead this band, everyone else has had a go apart from me. But you have to be careful with dreams, though, 'cos if you achieve them, then what will you have left to dream about? That's something Murdoc taught me, though not directly, just through observing. Since he's started drinking more, he's had less time to beat me up and torture me. So I think we've really turned a corner. I only hope that what's around the corner isn't much, much worse. But that's the future, you can't worry about that too much. What's happening right now is all that counts.

Noodle: The one constant in this universe is chaos, so who knows what brought us back together. I like how Russel once put it: 'Our paths entwine, then separate- like a messed-up pretzel'. Right now we are together, so let's celebrate the moment.

Russel: Murdoc is a sociopath, there's no denying it. But at least he has something real to say and he's not afraid to say it. In this age of consumerism, narcissism, neoliberalism and all these other -isms, that is rare and precious. Also, I bought some pretty expensive noise-blocking headphones.

Murdoc: I won't lie, getting back together again has been pretty emotional. Not for me. For the others. Russel, Noodle and 2D were overwhelmed to be in my presence again. It was almost embarrassing. But that's why Gorillaz gel so well. Respect for your betters.

Russel: What's embarrassing is the messages he sent us all, before we agreed to come back.

Murdoc: Don't know what you're on about.

Russel: Walls of text as far as the eye could see, "I've seen the error of my ways" this and "last time was a flop without you" that. It was low, man.

Murdoc: Yeah. Irony, mate. Lost on you Americans.

Russel: I mean I only agreed because I felt so uncomfortable when I finally ran into his ass.

2D: Noodle made him promise that he'd change, like he'd sort himself out, not cause as much trouble and actually work towards us having a better space to work in or something like that. The teasing hasn't really stopped but he's not been as difficult I suppose, just as much of a bellend though.

The Recording of 'Humanz'

With the band finally back within the walls of a studio, it was time to get to work on their fifth studio album. Over the course of two years Gorillaz worked with over 20 collaborators, produced over 40 tracks, and eventually boiled that down to 14 tracks for the standard release. The four were unanimously glowing once more, the spark was back.

Russel: Originally, perhaps inspired by the artificiality of the sound or possibly simply in tribute to Lou Reed, I considered naming the album Transformerz. I axed that name when Noodle told me it'd only remind people of those big, loud Michael Bay movies these days, and after a few other discarded options, I settled on Humanz, which seemed to sum up the various ideas of the album. One of the reasons for calling the album Humanz was the balance of male and female voices across all the songs, and you could also point to the diversity of race, genre, and nationality within those same tracks.

Murdoc: We wanted to make this record about NOW - this big festering bowl of shit soup we've landed ourselves in. If you think about our previous records, they are timeless works of art, like Shakespeare or David Bowie. But Humanz is about us as a species, how we're evolving into something new and probably very awful. In a few generations, humans will probably have been completely mugged off by silicone-based AIs... we're advancing faster than super gonorrhoea, whether we like it or not. That's what the new album's tapping into. The record's trying to capture that before it all vanishes in a puff of radioactive smoke.

Noodle: As you know, on the last record I was replaced with a Cyborg. That whole experience served as an inspiration for what I wanted to bring to Russel's concepts for Humanz. The gulf between human and cyborg is narrowing fast. Machines are becoming more human, and us more digital. That's something we wanted to capture.

Russel: That's our new reality, better get wise to it. Doesn't mean you have to dig it though, and I don't. Humanity 2.0 is on the horizon, and the view ain't good from where I'm standing so I'm prepping for the worst.

2D: I guess it's like a snapshot of the human race at this point in time. So right now we are humanz with a z. Part android, part organic. We are already augmented by technology, and many of us are less capable without it. Truth is distorted and manipulated. Glitched, almost.

Noodle: Funnily enough, the technological developments that give Gorillaz a voice and interactive, individual identities are the same that stand to fuck us all right up. As the workforce becomes more automated, so does the potential point of departure it offers from the confines of capitalism. Machine labour offers us an opportunity to pivot into a new global structure where humans are afforded the time and space to get on with important, meaningful stuff. The business of creativity, for example. The balance, though, could just as well tip the other way; through the feared obsolescence our slave technology could as well enslave us. In the past, Murdoc hired private detectives to spy on his enemies - now he uses a fleet of surveillance drones.

Murdoc: All my enemies are dead, I don't leave-(burrrrppp)-loose ends.

Russel: Right now, we still have control, still got the power. We can make a choice. And that's kind of what Humanz is about - this moment of transition we're in, moving real fast towards some new version of humanity. No one knows how it'll play out, but whatever happens, it's all on us.

Akin to Gorillaz previous records, a producer role was planned for this album, unlike Plastic Beach which was self produced by Murdoc.

Russel: All the disparate musical influences on Humanz are held together by a modern-sounding urban hip-hop/R&B sensibility, which has a lot to do with the impact of the main musical collaborator on the album, Anthony Khan. Better known by the moniker The Twilite Tone of D/\P, who is related to singer Chaka Khan. Khan is a Grammy-nominated American beatmaker, musician and producer who has worked with Kanye, Big Sean, John Legend and many more.

Murdoc: That lineup is shit mate, what are you on about?

Russel: What I mean is, a lot of people be influences on us so we try to bring them into the circle and make the whole thing round, you know. Put a hole in the donut, as I say.

2D: Put a hole in the donut. Yeah.

Murdoc: Yeah yeah, make it round.

Russel: Is there an echo in here? You two repeating what I say?

Murdoc: Russel, Russel man. Jesus.

2D: We're just agreeing with you, you put the hole in the donut, isn't that right?

Russel: Khan improvised, played and programmed much of the music on Humanz. In addition, he co-produced the album with Remi Kabaka, a producer and drummer who I've known for many years. He founded the Gorillaz Sound System DJ Project and works with Damon Albarn on his Africa Express project.

ABOVE
"When we told Noodle we couldn't save the guitar she snapped"
MURDOC NICCALS

ABOVE
Clear skies
"GET THAT CIGAR OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!"
MURDOC NICCALS

2D: Who's Remi?

Murdoc: Damon actually showed up to help with this one, I guess he was forced to since we'd hijacked his studio for the foreseeable future. Didn't do much music wise, mainly just screamed at the cameras.

Anthony Khan: I guess they had done their research and seen how I morphed and mixed so-called deep house, electronic music and dance music from a Chicago perspective with underground rap and hip-hop, and managed to create something new from that. The next step was for Russel and I to connect via Skype. While the conversation was cryptic, we laughed and the vibrations were right. It was in tune. They then flew me out to London in February to work with Gorillaz at their Studio 13 for a few days, and I ended up staying for two weeks. After that I came over for a month, and eventually I remained in London for most of 2016. They quickly realised that I was not just an MPC guy who programs beats, but that I actually was able to play and jam in real time with them. This goes back to my mother who, when I was young, bought me a Casio SK1 sampler keyboard. I would play that all the time, so I became quite proficient and ended up being able to play live with other musicians, playing things by ear. Jamming with Gorillaz made for fun, interesting, epiphany-causing times. Sometimes we transformed into children. That could be scary, because they would get so excited that we'd jam for hours. Over time we created so much material, it was ridiculous. Sometimes my producer hat would come on and I was like: 'We need to stop and organise this!' but I did not want to be a killjoy, so I often had to hold my tongue and just kept playing to keep the child in us alive. The idea of Donald Trump being president allowed us to create a narrative together. I suggested that the album should be about joy, pain and urgency. That was to be our state of mind before we even touched a keyboard or an MPC. Especially in American music, dare I say black music, there's a way of communicating joy that at the same time allows you to feel the struggle the person has been through. And the urgency is there because something needs to be done. So that was the mantra. I wanted to blend Gorillaz with the joy and pain and struggle that African-American music can express.

2D: You gotta be careful when you say that name cos he gets all panicky when you say things like that.

Murdoc: DONALD, WHAT HAPPENED TO DONALD. IS HE IN? IS HE IN? IS HE IN?

2D: No, you're alright, you're alright. You have to be careful with Murdoc, it's one of those things where you have to use sounds to tranquilise him, like when he gets into this state you can see he's very fidgety. You alright Murdoc?

Murdoc: What happened there?

2D: You had a little sleep there mate, you nodded off. You just had a little kip, you've come back now, you're alright.

Murdoc: Sorry, I went off there. I was dreaming about Donald Trump in a phone box. Oh, thank goodness. Really, we had no idea that was gonna pan out the way it did, but y'know, it did.

Anthony Khan: 2D is a wizard with GarageBand. The stuff he does sounds really great. He had a lot of ideas and we would build on those and embellish them and polish them. But sometimes I would take one of his ideas and completely rebuild it. A case in point is 'Saturnz Barz', which now is a whole other animal than what the original demo was.

As the writing progressed, Gorillaz, The Twilite Tone and Kabaka began discussing possible guest performers on the tracks that were being created.

Stephen Shedwig: Every vocalist was chosen for a specific song. Sometimes they were artists that they simply wanted to work with, which could be legends like Mavis Staples, or young, up-and-coming artists. Sometimes the idea of working with someone came first, and they then tried to think of a song that person could sing on, at other times they had a song and brainstormed about who could sing on it. Then it was a case of approaching the guest performers via their managements, and if they agreed to appear, 2D would give them a brief of what the song was about. For example the song 'Carnival' originated from 2D's experiences of visiting a carnival in Trinidad, and that inspired Anthony Hamilton in his lyrics and vocal performance."

Murdoc: Stephen, what are you doing out of your cupboard?

ABOVE
Heading out to Party Town

Russel: I'm extremely lucky, I get to work with people of all ages that are all incredibly nice and interesting, we all come together and we do this mad stuff and go on tour together and all become great friends. I mean, the Gorillaz family now is all in all I'd say, with all the musicians, we're talking about over 100 people.

2D: We've got a brilliant actor called Ben Mendelsohn, he narrates the whole album.

Murdoc: He's a psycho!

2D: Murdoc went and found him on the set of Bloodline, which is a really good series.

Murdoc: I made him come…into the fray.

2D: Yeah, I wondered where that was going then. He pulled him off his winnebago and then put him into the taxi with us and then we brought him to the studio.

Murdoc: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes. But it's not all about that, you know, it's multifarious in so many ways. I'm gonna go away and look that up later and see if I used that right.

How did you get the collaborating artists on board for this album? Surely enough kidnapping wasn't involved this time around.

Murdoc: OOH, LET ME TELL YOU! Surveillance drone. I've got so much dirt on people you wouldn't believe. Makes them very cooperative. Nah, only joking. I got on the blower to my showbiz friends I met when locked up, pulled in a few favours. It helps when you're as famous as I am, and you're offering people the chance to be on the record of the millennium. Nobody said 'no'. Get a grip. Just some people didn't fully say 'yes'. OK, some people said yes, and then later on, they said no. A few said 'later'. And by the time we got back to them it was too late. It's really very simple. Listen mate, if you're offered the chance to be on the album of the century, who's gonna say no? And if you do, you've made a very dangerous enemy. I'm not gonna pick a favourite - what happens in the studio stays in the studio. Except the music, of course. I mean, apart from Morrissey, Sade, Dionne Warwick, and Rick Ross. Uh, let's move on, shall we? Some of the decisions for this record were fueled by wanting to impress the kids, like the guest list of Humanz was partly curated by some I'd spoken to.

ABOVE
The noise makers
"I think Damon has a serious bell problem"
NOODLE

2D: Wot?

Murdoc: Yep, went out into the streets of London, down at the park, saw some kiddies,-

2D: I don't like where this is going…

Murdoc: And asked them what they were into, got a few names thrown at me, Vince Staples, Danny Brown, Nonce, couldn't find that last one…also got some rocks thrown at me too but, well, I did my bit.

Russel: They don't know about nothing, those two boneheads. Let's keep it on topic, aight? To guide collaborators into the "dark fantasy" setting that I envisioned for Humanz, I instructed guest artists to imagine a future in which the most insane, ludicrous thing they could think of had happened. Humanz is a journey through that night, post-whatever that was. A night where everything that you believed in was turned on its head. That news. When you go out that night, how do you feel?

Noodle: This record was anticipating that night but trying to make a party out of it. But the most messed-up party you ever went to, where you're not sure if it's a celebration or a wake. Everything is subverted. Just wrong.

Noodle: Take the very first track, 'Ascension'. Normally you ascend into heaven, but here we're lifting up to some new kind of hell, full of wrongness and horror. But you know, in a fun way. Make sense?

2D: We wanted this record to convey pain, joy, and urgency. Those were the three tenets. You couldn't enter the dark fantasy unless you were going to carry those three superpowers with you. After you settle that, everything changes. Mankind becomes slightly different and has a slightly different perspective and sensitivity about everything.

Murdoc: I was trying to imagine the spirit that might be present in a big city in the United States. Some of the songs reflect an atmosphere, some of them have a very specific image or story in mind.

2D: It's unashamedly about America, but not geographically like The Fall. Humanz pushes forward, drawing on America's themes and artistic traditions in an attempt to decipher an event as theoretically unexplainable now that it's real as when it was simply imagined. I don't think there would be Gorillaz if there wasn't America, I don't think there's anywhere in the world that has the sort of resources to keep something like Gorillaz afloat, other than America. It's big. It really is. God bless America!

Murdoc: Wow D, you've really sold out on this country, haven't you? Could you grab me a nice big meaty burger while you're out?And a pump action while you're at it.

Noodle: Some collaborators are really excited about the prospect. You also have people where you have to explain what it is.

Russel: Then, there might be a conversation, or a Skype session. Then we'll meet in person. Then, maybe and finally, we'll get to making music. Ninety-eight percent of the time, We're in the studio with the collaborators, giving them lyrics or notes or the song as it exists, and working on pieces of it together. Plenty of times, people come in and record and don't make it onto any of the finished products, whether album tracks or B-sides.

2D: Once we actually corral everyone and have our studio sessions, things can play out in a variety of ways. Sometimes we need a specificity to the part.

Noodle: It's a distinctly different role to play, rather than sitting in a room with three other musicians and writing an album or orchestrating a musical. There's as much architectural design, editing, and curating involved in making a Gorillaz record as there is songwriting. Nobody was really making pop music quite the same way before we did, and any imitators since haven't done it to this extent. The younger artists are sometimes more concerned with coming in and getting their part right. Other times, it mutates or comes into focus as we're in the room together. The far-reaching results of these kinds of processes yield albums that wind up broadening the world for listeners who venture down these kinds of rabbit holes suggested by our collision of sounds, traditions, and voices.

Murdoc: That was particularly true of Demon Days, where we really crystallised into this form from the more modest exploration of our debut. That's an album that impacted a lot of young listeners in the mid 2000's.

Russel: In a way, you could call me the architect. I'm pretty clear about what I want, but after that, it's completely up to them how they interpret it, as long as I get the stuff within my bigger narrative. I love being surprised by the direction people take. I suppose the one thing I do know is when it's not right. Not every connection forged by Gorillaz is as deep, one would have to imagine, but it's a telling glimpse into how the collaborations we seek are a little different than sending a finished track to somebody and asking for a guest verse.

Noodle: Gorillaz is a fusion of personalities, styles, and viewpoints from the margins of the musical cosmos. I think our sound is unique because we have no 'sound', exactly.

Murdoc: Bang on, Noodle. One of the things that makes us unique - apart from my incomparable genius and record-shattering genitalia - is the way we work with collaborators. It constantly forces you out of your comfort zone. The day you can pigeonhole Gorillaz is the day I fill my pockets with stones and walk into the sea.

So let's see what you lot get this time… Oh dear lord... Ben Mendelsohn, Vince Staples, Peven Everret, Popcaan, De La Soul, Danny Brown, Kelea, Grace Jones, D.R.A.M, Anthony Hamilton, Mavis Staples, Pusha T, Jamie Principle, Zebra Katz, Kali Uchis, Benjamin Clementine, Jenny Beth, Rag'n'Bone Man, Ray BLK, Kilo Kish, Imani Vonshà, Carly Simon, and Brandon Markell Holmes!

ABOVE
Grace Jones
"It was electrifying to work with her"
RUSSEL HOBBS

Russel: Yeah. We really wanted to expand upon the presence of collaborators on this one, we've been consistently adding more and more collabs as we've gone through each album, so we wanted to push the limits with this one. Because it's not really about us anymore, you know? We're just the canvas.

2D: We've got such good people on our album. We're so lucky, man.

Murdoc: A lot of fans didn't really like this decision, said there wasn't enough 2D on the record. But you see, 2D is like Christmas or World Cups. If you get too much of him, it loses the magic.

2D: I'm not magical. Just a human.

Despite the heavy amount of collaborations present on the printing, a lot of artists didn't make the final cut of the album. Other artists were switched around and moved about.

2D: The darkest, greatest thing in my vault is a 4 a.m. duet between myself and Erykah Badu. I'm out-of-tune drunk, and I wrecked it.

Russel: Initially 'Andromeda' featured contributions from Rag'n'Bone Man, who we later moved to The Apprentice, and with French singer-songwriter Christine and the Queens, which was also unsuccessful. Eventually we settled with Shelley FKA DRAM on the track, which seemed to be the best fit.

D.R.A.M: I'm just really thankful that Russel and the squad fuck with me like that. Authenticity, you feel me? I think you can never lose the cool. Once you have it, you can never lose it.

Who were some of your favourite artists to work with on the record?

Noodle: Grace Jones. She pilots her own spaceship far above the worlds of gender, race and fashion stereotypes, always going somewhere brave and new and beautiful. She is just the most inspiring person ever. She has this aura about her, like she's not human exactly. She can't be put in a box because she's like this ancient and powerful force of nature, the mother seed from where we all sprung. And then we did handstands together in the studio. It was really fun.

Give me a Grace Jones story.

Russel: Locating Grace is the beginning of the challenge. Pinning down a day she could come to the studio took about four months, with lots of false alarms: "Grace is coming! No, she's not." But she truly does have magic in her soul. She's really naughty but really lovely. Grace Jones' ghostly turn on 'Charger' was the result of her singing over the track for four hours, ad-libbing and vibing to it.

Murdoc: Grace Jones, oh, she's a lovely lady. I'll tell you what happened, after we'd done our studio sessions we had a little chat about love. Not me and her, I'm not talking about that.

2D: Are you trying to say that Grace Jones loves… you?

Murdoc: Well I think she had a little, er… well. There was a twinkle in her eye, you know? When she looked at me.

2D: I think her eyes were actually crossed. And I think she was a bit…'cos you kept going on about-

Murdoc: No, she was talking to me about how if I want to find love I've got to put my hook in deep into the ocean and pull out a big fish, and she said if she was in the ocean and I tried to pull her out she'd drag me in. And I laughed, I thought that was very funny.

2D: She's a very flirtatious woman, but I mean that in like a really good way. She came up to me and I thought she was gonna say something quite sort of scary but she said 'can you hold my coat for me?' and I had two cups of orange juice in my hand and I said 'I can't 'cos I got, look I got two cups of orange juice in my hand.' And then she just started hitting me with her handbag. It was my own fault, I should've known in my mind, I should've put the orange juice down and just took her coat for her, that was really short sighted of me.

Stephen Sedgwick: Grace Jones had recorded many vocals for 'Charger', which again set us up for a lot of editing. At one point Russel, Tone, and Remi wrote down all the phrases she had used on bits of card and laid them out on the floor to help them pick out the phrases that they liked and fit them in a structure. But in the end we used mostly 2D's vocals on that song, and in fact, the final vocal is for the most part a pretty early guide vocal that has a real magic to it. We tried re-recording his guide vocal, but could not recreate that magic. Grace's vocals pop up here and there in the song and add her vibe and character. Her contributions are a little freer and less structured, and that really fits the song. 'Charger' is a 2D song and Grace's vocals are in response to him.

Anthony Khan: 'Charger' is a punk track, or really post-punk art. Sometimes 2D is singing some poignant shit, but sometimes he's just mumbling. Using his demo vocal was in part a satirical move, because today you have what they call 'mumble rappers', who aren't actually saying anything. But they make these big, instant-gratification, top 10 hits. So I suggested poking fun at that by using 2D's demo vocal. We were being serious in the making of this album, but also making fun of ourselves and of what's going on.

Murdoc: What did he call that rapping stuff?

Russel: Mumble rap.

Murdoc: What rap?

Russel: Mumble rap!

Murdoc: Russ, seriously, I have no idea what you're saying.

Russel: MUMBLE RAP!

Murdoc: (snickers) What's that? I can't understand you when you mumble.

Russel: Man, you're so dead when we get outta here.

Stephen Sedgwick: The song was one of 2D's early demos, and it had a lot of raw energy. The idea came up to have Grace sing on it, and when we were in Jamaica we played it to her and she liked it and freestyled some stuff to it, which set the tone for the direction of the song. After that we put the track to one side for a while as we were working on other songs, and when she eventually came over to 13, we had one really great late-night session with her and with everyone enjoying themselves and freestyling stuff.

2D: Stephen Sedgwick's final mix session of 'Charger' contains 90 separate tracks! That's a lot if you ask me!

Murdoc: Danny Brown.

2D: Wot?

Murdoc: Danny Brown.

2D: I'm sorry?

Murdoc: I am answering the question! I loved working with Danny Brown! It was a laugh working with you Danny, the members of Gorillaz are so boring sometimes. If you could have a night out with me, no expense spared, where would you take me and what would we do?

Danny Brown: Hell yeah, that would be great. We'd definitely go to Vegas, hire a bunch of strippers in a penthouse suite, and see where the night takes us.

2D: When did he get here? How many people are actually in this room?

Russel: Danny Brown. I got to him through my spectral spectrum. My sonic stargate. That's how I got hold of him. And you know, sometimes it goes upright sideways, and when I press the button, I beam 'em down, you know. And then we do our thing, then I beam 'em back up. Actually a couple of them were delivered by drone, I got a pick-up drone.

2D: That new guest artist delivery service that they're advertising.

Russel: That sounds a little sarcastic, D.

2D: I'm not being sarcastic, listen-

Russel: That sounds a little sarcastic to me man.

Murdoc: Russel, he hasn't been sarcastic at all, mate, don't; he's been quite straight down the line, mate.

Russel: Aight, aight. Yeah, I'm down the line. It's all good…'cos you know we try to bring in people that have affected the world recent to when we bring out the album, you dig? So we try and make this shit contemporary. That's how we do.

2D: Er…alright then…I liked working with Carly Simon…it was odd actually, we never met in person, she did all her parts over the phone and the internet…

Russel: The journey of this record got pretty interesting. We started in Studio 13 in West London, then to a studio in Brooklyn called Mission Sound, then to Jean-Michel Jarre's studio in France, back to the U.S. for Chicago, and finally GeeJam Studio in Jamaica. That last one's the same place we recorded part of our debut, so we went back to our roots in a sense.

Murdoc: Our grass roots.

Thomas Crown Studios, Virginia Beach, Virginia

Pusha T: I wrote from the perspective of this day, I was writing from the perspective of a Republican win. When this really happened, I was like, 'Wait a minute, what type of crystal ball did this guy have? Why are you even asking me to think along these lines?' I don't think he thought that he would win, I'm not gonna go that far, but he definitely conceptualised this whole thing.

Russel: No one was allowed to say the names of political leaders. Those who tried, you can hear the bleeps on the record where their names were. I didn't want names, because this is not about that moment. That was the fuel for it. "Imagine how the world will be if that happens. " I don't want to give the most famous man on Earth any more fame, particularly. He doesn't need it.

Anthony Khan: I thought, 'What would it be like to have a conversation between the youth of today, particularly the black youth of today in America, and an elder, a black elder from America?'

JM Jarre Studio, April 2016, Paris, France

Stephen Sedgwick: We did a couple of days in Paris with Jean-Michel Jarre at his studio, and he ended up playing synths on three of the tracks. He told us about this watch that had a drum machine in it. I tracked it down and it turned out to be a Seiko, and I gave one to 2D. He started playing a drum beat on his watch and we recorded that with a microphone, and that's what sparked the song 'Strobelight'. The slightly distorted swinging beat you hear on that track came from the watch, and you can still hear us talking in the background!

So how did you get guitarist Noel Gallagher to play on 'We Got the Power'?

Murdoc: At one point that track was Noel, Damon Albarn, and Graham Coxon, so half of Blur basically. I wanted to stick them in a room together just for a laugh, y'know, watch them fight it out, but it ended up being the ultimate self-congratulatory Britpop moment. It was the victory lap, these geezers singing about all the power they had. Bunch of knob jockeys! Sounds great though.

Russel: I went back and opted to do it like you play something at the end of a film, as the credits roll. The track was becoming almost retro in its sort of spirit and way too rocky for this record, so I stripped it right back down again.

Murdoc: The testosterone levels were off the scale. Like a bunch of rabid dogs.

2D: I really liked Noel. We're like the Three Amigos if one of them fell off his horse onto a sharp cactus and died, leaving two of us behind to bring hope, justice, and music to the Wild West.

Noodle: Noel's really musical. He's got a great tone to his voice. I love his guitar playing. And he's incredibly funny. He's brilliant company.

Russel: The idea to include Jehnny Beth came about after XL Recordings founder Richard Russell said that Gallagher and Albarn "were two rich middle-aged men singing about having the power, which is not a good look". Beth wrote her own lyrics to be included on the song alongside those Albarn and Gallagher had already composed.

Jenny Beth: I think the message works in this context because the song comes at the end of the album, and at that point a lot has already been said. It doesn't just stand on its own. It's a rather dark record in general, so the song comes as a relief at the end and it's hopeful, but not without consciousness. So it's my kind of hope! I like to be reminded about love, but it has to come from a dark place, otherwise I don't buy it.

Noodle: Jehnny Beth was necessary. The album was meant to be a series of conversations between men and women. She sounds like herself, but there are also strong echoes of Siouxsie Sioux.

2D: I've heard that you do wild crowd surfing at your gigs. I'd be worried that someone would nick my trainers. Do you think I need to make more effort in Gorillaz? I think Murdoc is stealing my thunder.

Jenny Beth: I'd definitely nick your trainers if I was in the crowd for your surfing! But if you felt like jumping one day you should definitely do it. It's the best feeling in the world.

Jenny Beth: I never thought I'd be crowd walking one day, but it happened over time as the connection with the crowds grew stronger, and I felt it helped deliver the message that I wanted to deliver. I was looking for something to happen because I'm terribly bored at gigs.

2D: Uh…heh, thanks Jens…

Murdoc: Mhm…interesting. Can I ask, how did you get involved with 2D, Jenny?

Jenny Beth: Well, we met on Tinder…

Murdoc: Oh… Well, I'm glad that's worked out.

2D: (blushing) Yeah… It's great.

Chicago Recording Company, Chicago, Illinois

Russel: This place really ended up being the soul of the record. You could say hip-hop started in New York, but house? That's Chicago. And so is Humanz.

Noodle: We recorded in Chicago with local collaborators like Peven and Jamie Principle to capture a feeling of the Chicago warehouse sound, propelled by twisted 909 beats. Other parts were recorded in New York, bringing a different complexion to the record- a clash, but a good clash.

Peven Everett: I would say that the song is about figuring yourself out, you know; like, even in times like these where it's pretty chaotic, you have to find a centre. What I usually do is, you throw the track at me and I get everything in my head based on what you guys have told me. And it's then about, you know, putting it in an order that's poetic. An order that's ascending, not descending, in value.

Russel: My favourite collaboration has to be the one with Mavis Staples. She is an amazing woman. For me, her song 'Let Me Out' is about the freedom that her generation won for the current one. She is a warrior and inspiration.

Noodle: Mavis was there as the matriarch warning us all, and a kind of call to arms, really, for some kind of action.

Mavis Staples: So crazy! He came on the train from New York, ordered a Chinese takeaway, hadn't even written a song for me yet. I would have walked away if my manager hadn't told me how successful he was. I didn't really understand what they were telling me about a band of cartoon monkeys. But then I loved the song he wrote!

Anthony Khan: The process of working with Mavis Staples separately, alone, is a blessing. To work with Pusha T is wonderful and a blessing, so then to actually mix the two characters, their sound, on one song is mindblowing.

ABOVE
"Me trapped in the Manhattan subway after being ditched by Muds. Asshole."
RUSSEL HOBBS

Mission Sound Brooklyn, New York City, New York

Murdoc: New York's obviously got all the Hooters and everything. We got rid of them, didn't we?

Russel: You got rid of me man, y'all left me in Brooklyn with twenty-two thousand people outside. Took me days before I could catch up with any of you.

Stephen Sedgwick: During this editing process, we again always chose vibe and feel over perfection. This meant that some of the demo material made it to the final recordings. We often ended up keeping the rawness of the original ideas.

Kali Uchis: When Russel showed me the song, he explained it to me as kind of a song about a connection that you have with someone without ever having to say it. He doesn't use just regular instruments, and like, he doesn't put instruments together that you would expect to be together, he doesn't make any type of traditional music, he doesn't stick by any guidelines or any book, he just kinda does whatever he wants to do. It's cool cause I don't usually write about stuff like this. Most people write about love, and Russel was like, "write about the end of the world".

Geejam Studios, August 2016, Port Antonio, Jamaica

2D: For Jamaica, we ended up recording in the same studio we used back in 2000 when we were recording our self-titled debut. It was wicked to be back there again blud. So much had changed since we were first there, like a distinct lack of Johnny Birds or Wobbly's this time 'round, which is a shame really. I'd chalk it up to global warming.

Murdoc: What makes you say that?

2D: Dunno, it's just hot innit?

Russel: The first person we hit up in Jamaica was Popcaan. He came with quite a few of his friends. The session started about midnight, or maybe one in the morning…We worked all into the night but at the end of it I wasn't really feeling it, I don't know why. Next day, we had a chat, communicated and he came in and he did this. I think this is quite different to anything else he'd ever done. It's very personal. It tells a kind of alternate narrative to a lot of the ideas within modern dancehall.

M-AL

Murdoc: You've become quite the diplomat haven't you Russ?

Russel: Muds, you didn't even know that he was on the album until now.

Murdoc: Who, me? I- I resent that statement! I am- DID YOU HEAR THAT? Actually, no I didn't. They just put it together while I was off, I dunno, kicking turtles or something.

2D: Necessity is the mother of invention…and he came out with this. It just fit perfectly…and we've got this crazy tune. I mean, it doesn't sound like anything else!

Russel: Next we brought in Zebra Katz.

Zebra Katz: When producer Twilite Tone first reached out to me about the project I didn't think much would come out of the initial studio session we had in Williamsburg. After the overall shock and awe of it all, I had another session with the Gorillaz team in London, and then again in Jamaica where I heard 'Sex Murder Party' for the first time. My first impression after hearing it was 'ohhhhh let's go!'. I was feeling the vibe and inspiration behind how the title came about. My verse is an ode to all the loves in your life that left you high and dry. It's about that wallflower in the corner of the party who calmly watches the chaos unfold.

Jamie Principle: We were having lunch and 2D was reading this article which mentioned the words sex, murder, and party, so we thought it would be a wicked song to do. Twilite Tone came up with a beat and we started putting it together. Russel wants you just to be yourself and put your personality into the music.

Zebra Katz: I heard what Jamie Principle had laid down, and then I wrote something and bounced ideas around in the studio. The only other experience I've had like that was working at Rick Rubin's studio. It was a really open, fun, encouraging environment to be who I was and say what I needed to say.

Feng Shui Studios, Hollywood, California

Russel: We recorded with Vince Staples here in California, who leads the charge of Humanz with 'Ascension'. He's been a Gorillaz fan since Demon Days; I met Staples a few years ago. I told him the name of the beat and he took it from there.

Vince Staples: I was happy to be a part of the project. The song is great, but it does not compare to the things that Gorillaz have taught me about myself and my art, and I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to know them.

Russel: De La Soul, who are now our only guests to appear on a Gorillaz record for the third time with our track 'Momentz', have kept popping back up because we've become such good friends with them. They come into focus when there's an urgency to them. Looking around the world in early 2016, we had a hell of a lot of material to find that urgency for Humanz.

2D: We were originally trying to get Dave Chappelle to do this track. But he knows Pos, and somehow, that's how that happened.

Murdoc: For hundreds and hundreds of years the cartoon has been used to allow the satirist to express stuff that's impossible in any other context, so long live the cartoons! I think they're needed more than ever now, of course I would say that.

Russel: What's that mean?

Murdoc: You'll figure it out eventually…probably.

Anthony Khan: I think comedy and music are the remedy for the serious issues that we face today in the world.

And with that, the bulk of Humanz had finally been recorded!

Murdoc: We went everywhere to make this record though, didn't we?

2D: Yeah, all over the place.

Murdoc: Well the only place we didn't actually go to was-

2D: Tuting.

Murdoc: Was it Tuting?

2D: It was Tuting, yeah we didn't go there.

Murdoc: Oh, and we didn't go to Spalding in Lincolnshire.

Noodle: When music is being created by endless improvisations, the editing and mixing stages become as important as the actual creation stage.

Noodle: Although Russel and Anthony Khan had knocked each of the Humanz tracks into manageable shape to be able to present them to the guest artists and record them, the guest contributions themselves often resulted in hours more recording, leading to a long editing process followed by an extended six-week mixing process, during which us, Khan, and Kabaka were still busy putting the final touches on arrangements and song structures and preparing the unmixed songs for final mixdown.

The final six weeks of mixing took place at Studio 13 during November and December of 2016.

Stephen Shedwig: Doing final bits of production on some of the songs got them ready for me to mix. Most of the songs took me a day to a day and a half to mix, but in some cases, like 'We Got The Power' and 'She's My Collar', they realised that the production needed more work and therefore the mixes took a lot longer. Once all the arrangements and production are complete, mixing is relatively quick.

Anthony Khan: You know, in film, the directors are only as good as their editors. So for me the editing process is where the real production happens, and for this album it happened towards the end of 2016. We went in and did a lot of cleaning up. There were tons of great movements in the songs and the arrangements, but it often was a matter of: 'You don't need a full tank of gas to get to the end of the street'. So there was a lot of stripping things down, not only with the musical arrangements but also the vocals. Towards the end it was mainly Steve and I doing this, with Remi and Russel chiming in, and towards the very end Fraser T. Smith also occasionally came in to give feedback.

The end result this time around with Humanz is another Gorillaz album lined with genres and voices entangled. Humanz continues with some of the bleary-eyed nocturnal qualities of The Fall, sickly rubberiness meeting wistful meditations. Discounting a number of very short interludes, the finished album contains 14 fully fledged songs, with five more appearing only on the 'deluxe' version. How did you cull the album down to 19 songs? I've heard there's more where that came from.

Noodle: Yeah, there are many. But you never cull, you let things take shape. Once you have all the tracks, those that fit pull together naturally. The rest are never lost - just waiting for their moment in the sun.

December 2016 *Humanz mastered by John Davis at Metropolis Mastering, London.*

Russel: Really at the end of the day, I feel like this album made me realise a lot of things about the world we live in. I'm always fearing the next day, what's to come, what came before. I just can't help it. But Humanz made me open my eyes and say, "Hey, this world that I feared is what we live in now," there's no denying it, there's no refusing it, there's no sense in fearing it. The only thing we can and should do is try and find a way to fix it. So it doesn't get worse, so the next generation can live in a world where they don't have to fear as much as I did.

Alright, let's see what you got.

Murdoc: I'm off-

Russel: Sit your ass down!

Humanz Song by Song

INTRO: I SWITCHED MY ROBOT OFF / ASCENSION

The ominous opener using audio from the STS-121 Space Shuttle launch, with commentary from the albums narrator Ben Mendelsohn, is a wake up call from our alternate virtual lives, heading us to unplug ourselves from the ever-evolving digital stratosphere and prepare for the journey ahead.

Russel: This record starts off with an explosive open from Vince Staples, accompanied by sirens and an unsettling ringing noise that we reversed. Like having a bucket of water thrown over you in the dead of night, it's disorientating and hard to get your head together.

Noodle: A feeling of everything, all of the world's problems, all the fear and the frenzy, all hitting you at once seemingly out of nowhere. You've been unplugged from the Matrix that engulfed all of society in the past decade and are thrust directly into the worst of all the western world has to offer.

Murdoc: A clear progression from the digitalised world that slowly consumed the last album, like a cybernetic python that's slowly gobbled you up and sharted you out. That was me you know? That progression. It was all intentional, honest!

As the sirens fizzle into white noise, Russel's drum machine comes swinging full-force, reintroducing the looped ringing that was present at the beginning of the track.

Murdoc: First album in about, what, seven years? And you're kicking it off with a tacky little dinky thing like that? Outrageous.

Russel: Well, 'the end is nigh' wasn't the only statement I was trying to make here, anyone pick up on the lack of a bassline until the very end?

Murdoc: Sounds cheap if you ask me.

2D: My lyrics sort of focus on how quickly we tend to churn through tragedies, it links into attention span, through phones and such, like we almost fetishes these horrendous things that happen for a quick jolt of shock or anger. That's all phones are really I've noticed, these little boxes of short-burst emotion.

Noodle: They call it 'armchair activism', in which someone utilises real world issues for a quick excuse to preach on top of their soapbox, only to seemingly forget it ever happened moments later. I'm not sure why exactly this has come about, but I've come across it many times during everyday scrolling of things like Instagram. Maybe it's because we crave being in a position of being objectively right, so that nobody can question us. Maybe it's because social media moves so fast that we're ignorant to our own lack of loyalty to important political movements.

Murdoc: It always links back to ego, love.

Russel: Vince, to me anyway, represents the polar opposite. He's the man having to tackle these issues head on. Inequality, racism, they're everyday occurrences. 2D's lines are like the outsider peeking in. They know how bad it is, but they don't feel it.

STROBELITE

Russel: 'Strobelite' grew from an initial drum pattern made on a SEIKO drum machine watch.

Murdoc: I was gunning for one of those LCO Watch-ligher's to be used on the record personally, but Russel made a fair argument when he said that it had 'no practical use for a recording session'. I mean, I disagree of course. You never know when you need to spark one, and you can't exactly lose your lighter if it's on your wrist now, can you?

Russel: You done?

Murdoc: Honestly, I don't understand why those things never took off. What's the two things chicks ask you for at the bus stop? The time or a light. This way you've got both.

Russel: Unbelievable…

Noodle: The song is something of a retrospective on Peven's part on how far we've come in terms of integration of technology into our daily lives, and how that matched with the busy lifestyles of the 21st century have isolated many of us socially.

Russel: It's about taking a step back and rediscovering the world around us, the real world. And the importance of being able to interact with other people, that's the only true way forward.

Murdoc: And where's the only place kids these days socialise face-to-face? Their local night spot spouting the same twelve '80s tracks on repeat every weekend. Let me tell you one thing, it's not an '80's weekend if it's every week. Uk nightlife is taking a turn for the worst. Heed my warning.

2D: Back in the sixties, my Dad helped do the light show for Pink Floyd at the UFO club in London. After I was born he gifted me one of the strobe's he had leftover from that show, along with my first synthesiser, a Transcendent 2000. I used to jam along to 12-inches by people like The Human League. Thank goodness I wasn't epileptic because I was really strobing, I don't know what it did to my brain. There were no drugs back then besides the painkillers, just my strobe light. I told the others and that became the main inspiration for this track.

Murdoc: No offence to Pink Floyd but, y'know, we've got tunes.

2D: One thing I always adored about Jamaica was how clear the night skies were, nothing but stars and planets as far as you can see. When I was at the local market, not so far from where we were set up, I bought myself this interactive planetarium to see if I could figure out exactly where everything is, just to give me something to mess about with next time I went up on the roof of our studio, wanted to get a little perspective y'know?

Russel: When D turned the thing on I just so happened to be messing with a beat I was working on, they both overlapped with it saying "Press the button to begin". I liked it so much we sampled it for the start of the track.

Noodle: 2D's planetarium along with the studio location both became huge influences on the more 'otherworldly' feel you can find on a good few of the tracks throughout the album.

Murdoc: If you huff a can of hornet killer you'll find that you get an unusually similar effect.

2D: My chorus is all about subverting expectations, as well as living multiple lives through things like technology. Like Russel said earlier, Popcaan's lyrics tell an alternative narrative to what we've come to expect in modern dancehall, and that's what Gorillaz have always been about really, subverting what's expected. There's a few different layers to this which reference two things that I like, The Pixies and French films. The Pixies sang about growing up to be a debaser, going against the grain. And the term Debaser was a reference to a 1929 film called 'Un Chien Andalou', that's what this chorus is in reference to, 'I got debts, I'm a debaser'. I'm reestablishing what we're known for best while sneaking in a few pop culture references, which probably makes these my cleverest lyrics I've done to date come to think of it.

Murdoc: You're getting way too big for your boots, sunshine. Being truthful for a second…does anyone actually understand what this bloke's saying in this song, or is it just me?

MOMENTZ

Murdoc: This one's very phili- philosoph- philosophic- this one's very good.

Russel: This one's all about those precious little moments in life, the ones that become what Noodle calls a 'core memory'.

Noodle: The premise is simple, Posdnous of De La Soul takes centre stage to rap about the desperate fight every adult has felt in their life, the fight against time optimisation. Trying to get the most out of every moment in life, ironically, dulls those we should savour. I know as I've grown closer to my mid twenties I've experienced this on many occasions.

Murdoc: Need life to slow down? Have a hit of special K. That always does the trick for me.

2D: Special wot?

Murdoc: Any general anaesthetic will do really.

Russel: 2D's post-chorus is in reference to something I read about called the Native American Medicine Wheel, which represents many things, The Four Elements, The Four Stages of Life, The Four Trials of Man.

Noodle: The entire track is carried by a beat intentionally crafted to sound as if it's a ticking clock, with every new movement having a greater impact on you. My bridge section are those few and far between episodes of tranquillity in life, the morning after hitting it too hard. You lay there staring at the ceiling with no obligation for the whole day as time flies by infinitely.

2D: I dunno what you class as 'hitting it too hard' if your hangovers are tranquil.

INTERLUDE: THE NON-CONFORMIST OATH / SUBMISSION

The first interlude of the record, taken from a skit performed by Steve Martin, represents the falsehood of trying to be original, a subject Gorillaz have notoriously never shied away from.

Noodle: In the current day, things such as algorithms and trends discourage us from even attempting to be original. Even when we find a new and unique approach, we have extreme guidelines to fill for success.

Murdoc: This one's an apology letter from Damon to his old pal Graham, awe how sweet!

Russel: At its core, this is a song about love turning bad when life goes haywire.

2D: I think we've all at one point fallen madly in love with someone who isn't good for us, whether it be themselves not being very well or just the circumstances surrounding the relationship. Kelela's lyrics are trying to process it all rationally, before the mood switches up. Like the straw the broke the camel's back Danny Brown slams in without remorse. His verse is like a river of pent up emotion just bursting out.

Murdoc: That was incredibly g-

Russel: Graham Coxon was a welcome addition to this track, while his influence is subtle, it really tops the whole thing off.

Murdoc: Shall we steal a cheeky kiss, ol' chum?

CHARGER

On this short electrifying tune, 2D sounds as if he is possessed by the wayward spirit of Grace Jones, as the two harmonise supernaturally.

Murdoc: This whole track was ad libbed which was very, very tiresomeeee. I can only listen to 2D incoherently mumble into a microphone for so long before 'BANG!!!!'.

Russel: Grace basically ad-libbed for four hours straight, that's dedication.

Murdoc: She has a very evocative presence, does our Jones. If she heard a peep while performing she'd smack the backside of your nackers. My kinda gal. I don't half miss her.

Russel: Noodle's electrifying guitar riff carries this entire track, stringing it along from start to finish. We had a lot more going on in earlier cuts of this one but eventually decided to strip it back in favour of something more focused on the core elements.

Murdoc: Don't look so smug about it.

2D: This song is about how us as humans process the speed of news and information these days. Everything goes so fast on social media, that we end up hearing just a bunch of people's opinions, and biases, but not really the truth. And that bias can dominate us all.

Murdoc: Is this song even about anything?...You're just saying the damn thing over and over again man, come on get a grip.

Noodle: The Japanese term "Shukuchi" is used within the lyrics of this track, the definition of this term sort of varies, in traditional culture however, it's used for various mythical techniques of fast movement. In this context, I think it applies to what 2D is trying to say in the song, Shukuchi, rapidly moving between two sides.

Murdoc: This is our big heavy hitting punk song on the record. Following in the footsteps of 'Glitter Freeze' and 'White Light' and such…

…So is that all?

Murdoc: Yeah. Was that not enough for you?

INTERLUDE: ELEVATOR GOING UP / ANDROMEDA

Russel: Elevator Going Up, it's like a bubble of clarity, you're transcending above the chaos of the world to focus on your own soul for a minute.

Murdoc: Andromeda was the name of this nightclub in Colchester where they played soul music. There wasn't a lot of that around in the '80s in Essex, but there was that Essex soul boy kind of theme that existed… It was a positive thing in a quite grim world.

2D: This one's my favourite track, actually. It takes you far away. It all began when I was talking about the greatest '80s songs with Twilite Tone, and we decided that 'Billie Jean' by Michael Jackson and 'I Can't Go for That (No Can Do)' by Hall and Oates were two of our favourite tunes, for their tempo and pop sensibilities. We wanted to somehow channel the greatness of those into our own music. In fact, the original name for Andromeda was 'I Can't Go for Billie Jean'.

Murdoc: Only you could come up with a name like that.

2D: Thanks, Murdoc.

Murdoc: Jog on.

Russel: We went through so many versions until we got it right. We had one with Rag'n'Bone Man and another with D.R.A.M as the main vocals, but we cut it out to only the bridge and backing vocals with Noodle.

Noodle: It ended up being a very personal song, evolving from a disco inspired DRAM heavy track to more of a 2D centric synth ballad set in the outer reaches of the cosmos.

2D: In the track list there's 'For Ethel' after the name of the track. Ethel was someone very close to all of us, I was thinking about her while I was getting these lyrics in one take. The song as a whole is me reflecting on all these beautiful people that we've lost over the years. So many I'll never get to speak to again, like Bobby Womack who sadly passed away in 2014 while we were on hiatus. It got to me like no other track ever has. You can really feel it at the end of my bridge. I was in tears.

Noodle: This is the heart of the record, with every other track revolving around it. Arguably one of our more genuine and emotionally raw tracks to date.

Russel: It's the most traditional Gorillaz track on the entire album, with us all playing an integral role. Percussions, bass, vocals and backing.

Murdoc: The harmonious nature of 2D and Noodle's vocals really put into perspective how far we've come I suppose. Last time we had the two do something like this on a track was when she was about yay high, oh happy days!

BUSTED AND BLUE

As Andromeda fades out, we begin to hear a siren in a distant raining forest, as the siren gets louder and louder, we hear at least a dozen different synths at once. Before the lamentful crooning vocals of 2D come in.

2D: This is my moment, so it's very special to me. Some people say the title is also referring to me, but I have no clue what they're talking about.

Noodle: 2D and I recorded this on our Jamaican rooftop at 3 in the morning. It was raining that night, and I recorded his vocals and my guitar using a dictaphone.

2D: Funny, I got a strange sense of deja vu.

Russel: 2D uses his big time to shine moment on the record very well, he is unable to decipher what's reality anymore, what's fake, what's real, is this tree made out of metal? Is this human made out of flesh? It's getting to his head.

Noodle: This track shares a common theme with the rest of the album, about how technology has dominated our current landscape. A shift in mindset that not even we have been able to escape, as an ever-evolving band, it's just a natural flow.

Murdoc: It's also the one I used to get 2D off my backside, clambering on about how he "has no song". It's like he hasn't gotten the memo that I'm the king of this little commune, he's just my jester. And really, don't they need some time to shine too?

2D: I love my moment.

INTERLUDE: TALK RADIO / CARNIVAL

The interlude preceding Carnival features Ben Mendhelson on talk radio, the man sounds as if he is a mentally deranged lunatic, speaking to himself in spurs like some sort of screwball, a nutter, a disturbed senile man.

Murdoc: Woah man, cool your jets.

After the radio show, we found ourselves in well…a carnival…a hellish one at that, glass breaking, our guest singer, Anthony Hamilton, humming quietly, some manic man laughing to himself. Before Anthony Hamiltion finally breaks into his song.

Murdoc: That opening part of the song are just the noises I hear when I close my eyes in bed.

2D: This one originated from my experiences of visiting a carnival in Trinidad and Tobago, which inspired Anthony Hamilton in both his lyrics and vocal performance.

Russel: This song is another stepping stone in the themes present on the record, comparing said themes to that of a carnival game, we pay up, we play, we want to win, but do we really ever win at those games? Not really, in fact they're usually always rigged.

2D: OH! I get it now!

Russel: D, didn't you write this one?

2D: Yeah, but really I was just writing about that carnival in Tobago, it was vile, smelt like a rhino's arse.

Murdoc: Let's just go to the next one, this is just sad to watch.

LET ME OUT

This mournful melody is a call to arms for the current environment of America. 2D, Pusha T, and Mavis Staples all speak the same message, in the hopes that someone is willing to listen to them.

2D: I think what really stands out to me on 'Let Me Out' is how the message of this song is viewed through a sort of…religious viewpoint if that makes any sense. Just all this talk of going into the light, facing the devil, begging for mercy. You get what I am saying right?

Murdoc: Yep. Been there, done that.

Noodle: I like the beginning of this song, Pusha T seeks out advice from the old and wise Mavis Staples, comparing and contrasting the 1960s America to present day America.

Russel: Pusha T's presence on this is a powerful one. He represents a muffled voice within our current society. He questions if his priest is lying to his congregation that everything will be ok, if his nieces and nephews are in danger, if his life will be cost by police brutality, if there is a peaceful afterlife, if change will ever come. It's all heavy subject matter, but these questions must be brought up.

Noodle: Mavis's verse is the answer to Pusha's questions, and it's very bleak. You have to give up your beliefs, your identity, in order to fit in and survive. Sacrifice is how you live. She ends with a very vague statement "Change comes to pass, you best be ready for it", what is this change? Only time can tell.

Russel: Then 2D's verse comes in. Something I have always been afraid of is getting bigger, and more prevalent. Times are changing, but I won't give up. I'll keep fighting, I won't back down.

2D: This is one of the tracks where we censored some names. We wanted this track to be timeless as it is relevant.

Russel: Getting Mavis Staples on this one was a big deal for me. Having a voice on this track that was heard during the Civil Rights protest, when racial prejudice was at an all time high, and having her voice again here some 50 years later…it really was an honour. A highlight of my career and an experience I will never forget.

INTERLUDE: PENTHOUSE / SEX MURDER PARTY

Something was gonna happen tonight…

Murdoc: It was inevitable, what you're about to witness is the be all end all of humanity. Que the intro.

Russel: It started off with Twilite Tone, 2D and I meeting for lunch one morning before heading over to the studio. D was reading an article in the paper which jumped out at me. Can't quite remember what it was all about but I distinctly remembered three key words. Sex, Murder, Party. They outright jumped off the page.

Noodle: I think as humans we find it easy to escape into routine, we rely on the rhythm in our day to day lives for a sense of normality. That extends into times of turmoil whether we realise it or not. We applied the title 'Sex Murder Party' to the routine of those at the end of the world, with little emotion left to hold them back from primal urges and maturity.

Murdoc: Average wednesday.

2D: My mum never liked our lyrics. She says they're too negative. She likes some things we do, but… for example, when Sex Murder Party came out she didn't feel particularly proud of me.

SHE'S MY COLLAR

On this…uh….stimulating?... tune Kali Uchis and 2D sing a duet about one another, and how they benefit from each other in the best and worst ways possible.

Murdoc: This was literally written under my duvet one night in bed. It's a song about the loneliness of the nocturnal journey, into the digital ether. Sometimes a tune is a very nice mirror of the situation you're in.

Russel: Kali Uchis did a phenomenal job on this one, her music is usually pretty light in tone, so I was surprised how she was able to seamlessly blend in with the dark world of Gorillaz in this track.

Murdoc: This is probably the scariest song I have ever written to be honest, what is more terrifying than having a one night stand…that goes beyond a one night stand…*shivers*...goose pimples all up my legs right now.

Noodle: I think this track is sad as it is…"scary", it's a very real situation that thousands of people find themselves in. This halfway point between lust and true love, you don't know which side to pick, and it leaves you feeling lost.

2D: This song isn't like anything Gorillaz have ever done before, it has this pulsating sexual energy to it that only a certian someone of us could bring to the table.

Murdoc: You can't tie this tiger down. I'm a lone wolf at heart, a beast. A WILD animal.

Noodle: Mhm, we'll see.

INTERLUDE: THE ELEPHANT / HALLELUJAH MONEY

2D: I used to like elephants.

A hazy, twisted lullaby accompanied piercing synths, haunting gospel choirs and distorted bell chimes. Featuring Benjamin Clementine, as he preaches a grim prediction of the near future.

Murdoc: Big Ben, right? You know Big Ben? Can I talk about Big Ben? Big Benjamin Clementine, oh yeah! Hallelujah Money. He's a lovely big feller, he's got the voice of - his voice is just all melish- melif- melifous- mellifluous. He's great.

Russel: This one's for the history books. An ironic retelling from the perspective of the one percent and the blind. This time we've lost the battle, but we can learn from our losses. Hallelujah Money is a reminder of what we allowed to be set in stone, a tale of greed and ignorance prevailing over all else, a tale of privilege being at the top of one's priority list. The urge to be THE man over the wellbeing of the masses. It's the tale of-

Murdoc: Alright Russ we get the point.

2D: In a sense, I guess it's about understanding your enemy.

Noodle: We had the story narrated by one Benjamin Clementine, who Murdoc met on the streets of Paris back in 2007 while 'partying around the world'.

Murdoc: He was homeless at that point, come to think of it I was at the time too. I woke up on the same bench as him, he was squawking away, something about, oh I don't know, breaking a string of his or something. He'd busk for money you see. I said to him "Y'know, I'm a musician too" to which he responded by thwacking me round the back of the head with one of his boots. Told him to give me a call if he was ever in London. Probably shouldn't have said that, that's when he threw the other one at me. But he did call in the end, only eight years later than expected.

Russel: The track serves the same purpose as 'Fire Coming Out Of The Monkey's Head' from our second album, 'Demon Days'. It's a condensed summary of where the world is at, at that point.

Noodle: They're both commentaries on key turning points in recent history, like bookmarks.

Murdoc: I'd tell my boys this tale at night, around the fire. Along with half a shandy and a copy of The Omen on DVD.

WE GOT THE POWER

On the final note of this hour-long end of the world celebration, we come to a track that isn't like anything else we've heard on the rest of this album. Bells are ringing, people are singing, and there's a bit of buoyant optimism, a glimpse of hope.

Russel: I think it was important for the pace of this album that we end off on a lighter note, if things ended with Hallelujah Money, that would leave people with a sense that things are never going to get better. But that's not how life works really, things don't stay consistently bad, day and night, forever, it's a constant flux.

2D: I think it was a good idea to get Jenny on this one, her confident voice really helped with what we were trying to bring to the track, she also sings a little bit of French in here too.

Murdoc: I taught her how to sing in French, y'know. *sniffs* True story.

2D: We also got Noel Gallagher, and D.R.A.M to do backing vocals on this one. In a sort of lighthearted way, I'd promised Noel he could be on this record. I thought it might be cute. I just hope Liam doesn't come after me for singing with his brother about how we have the power to love each other.

Murdoc: No doubt he'd have a fantastic one-liner about what a bunch of fucking knobheads we are.

Noodle: Throughout the course of history, humans have been forced to live through extreme periods of grievance, whether it be war, disease, economic collapse…Despite all of this however, we have been able to overtop it all, and come out with more experience, and even a little bit of change. It's a bit of a contrast from the rest of the album, but it's a reminder that we need to keep in the back of our minds no matter what. The earth keeps spinning, so why stop living now?

Noodle Goes Jaguar

October 2016 *Noodle breaks into Jaguar's secret testing facility.*

Noodle: While we were still recording Humanz, we happened to not be far from a secret Jaguar test facility. One day I got so bored of Russel and Murdoc's bickering that I decided to sneak in and go for a quick joyride. If I left everything as it was when I found it, there shouldn't be a problem, right?

After beating the track record, Jaguar were so impressed by Noodle's charisma and confidence behind the wheel, that they decided not to press charges in exchange for her to take the position as the new Jaguar racing global ambassador.

October 7th 2016 *Noodle is announced as the global ambassador for Panasonic Jaguar Racing.*

Noodle, freshly appointed, was driving a worldwide push with Jaguar Land Rover - Britain's largest R&D investor - to encourage more young people, women in particular, to pursue a career in engineering, science, data, and technology.

Noodle: The Jaguar Land Rover Academy provides a lifelong learning platform to tackle market challenges and future business requirements. Employees, current and future, of any age and background, can benefit from the Academy and develop their careers, from schools, apprentices, and graduates to more experienced employees and ex-military personnel. The company plans to use its entry into Formula E to promote JLR's thought leadership position as a business that is shaping the future to solve the technology innovation and skills gap challenges.

Noodle and Panasonic Jaguar Racing Engineer Charanya Ravi set out on a mission to inspire the next generation.

Charanya: At school, I played a lot of instruments - flute, piano, violin, saxophone, and, academically, right up until my GCSEs I did a lot of art, all of which I really enjoyed. But I loved maths and physics too, and when it came to A-levels, those subjects stayed with me and drove me towards engineering. Also, growing up, I loved watching Formula 1. When I went to university I got to grips with the technical aspects of motorsport and realised how many opportunities there were. It suddenly stopped being just a sport and started being a career option.

Noodle: Formula E is the newest and most innovative motorsport in the world. It's a baby - just two years old, and it only uses electric cars. Think of all the research and development into electrical engines! It will have benefits for the whole world, so I want to nurture it, support it and help it grow strong. Like one of those Tamagotchi. Remember them?

While Charanya was studying some performance data with fellow engineers, Noodle, er, borrowed one of the Jaguar I-Types and drove a quick lap - and drove it faster than any of the team's "professional" (not to mention male) drivers.

Noodle: Growing up as I did, I missed out on some of the regular things teenagers do. Yes, I've toured the world, played arenas, written a best-selling album, and gone to Hell and back all before I turned sixteen. But it would be nice to make some normal friends and just, you know, hang out. Maybe my new Jaguar teammates can help me with that. Oh, and making tea, the English way. Murdoc says my Japanese tea tastes like the devil's tears. I'm not sure if that's a compliment.

Murdoc: It's not.

While this hotshot engineer acknowledges that males outnumber females in her field by some margin, she knows first-hand that there are equal opportunities for young graduates of either gender.

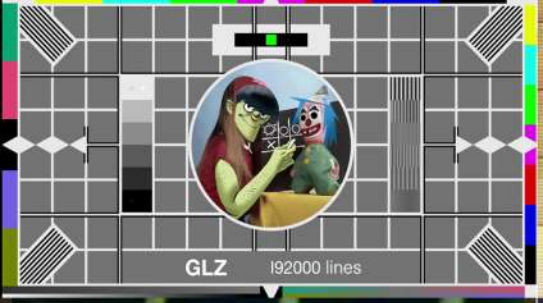
Charanya: Absolutely, this industry is so good because it's purely results-driven and the focus is more on your capabilities. In such an environment it's fantastic because it really doesn't matter about your gender. If you've got the talent, and you are driven, and you can get the result, great - you'll get the same opportunities as a male counterpart.

That's the kind of fighting spirit that appeals to Noodle.

Noodle: I hope to enhance my understanding of progressive automotive racing technology and safety features, but mostly I want to inspire a new generation of engineers to follow in your footsteps. And if there's time - how do you say - 'kick some butts' on the racetrack. When do I get the keys?

Noodle has been around the world, seen the pollution on the world's oceans, the plastic on the beaches. She knows the ways in which connected, sustainable, tech-advanced engineering innovation is vital.

Noodle: It is too easy to destroy what we have, and it takes great effort to protect it. But we humans are smart. The rest of us have the power to change our world. Progress has caused many problems, so let's use progress to find tech-advanced engineering solutions to solve them.


GLZ
192000 lines

Hallelujah Money

January 19th 2017 *The Hallelujah Money music video is released*

On the night prior to the inauguration, a statement was to be made. Gorillaz launched their second three-pronged offensive. Having filmed a video of Benjamin reciting a poem, accompanied by a slideshow projected onto glass panels behind him, the band released special footage to serve as commentary on a politically-charged historical moment under the guise of a new music video entitled 'Hallelujah Money'.

Murdoc: Technically, I was unconscious on the day of the inauguration when 'Hallelujah Money' was released. Had to get completely spuzzed off my nut to get through that shit show. But yeah, Benjamin was great.

Russel: I had been gathering all this old tape that I felt was relevant to the situation. The whole thing was like a subliminal information broadcast, accompanied by the final track we finished mixing for the album.

Hallelujah Money is set in the halls of a pristine tower, on the first day of the new world. Benjamin is in a position of contemplation for both what is to come and what has already passed for humanity. In the clip, he stands in a gold-plated elevator, delivering his pronouncement of disappointment in front of a flickering screen that flashes chaotically between clips from cursed children with glowing eyes, to KKK rallies, reinforcing the message in the words that Benjamin so clearly enunciated. The images behind him cuts then to native dancers in Africa, the La Candelaria brotherhood in Spain, drawing throughlines from various cultures and tribes, until an appearance from the familiar silhouette of 2D crops up near the end. Clementine delivers each line with precision and grace, conveying the severity of his words even as the final scene disjointedly devolves into a ringing animated bell, another close up shot of a human eye snaps into view behind him, slowly beginning to sparkle and become coated in gold, before suddenly cutting away to a crying cartoon character and immediately thereafter ending. How else could a Gorillaz music video this serious conclude, except with a little levity?

Russel: It's deep. We watch Benjamin slowly descend more and more into madness over the span of four and a half minutes.

Russel: The imagery surrounding him seemingly enabled his instability more. There's all sorts happening here. Cosplay, Killer Clowns, Animal Farm.

2D: Village of the Damned, Clint Eastwood, (the other one, not ours). Even Spongebob of all things pops up towards the end.

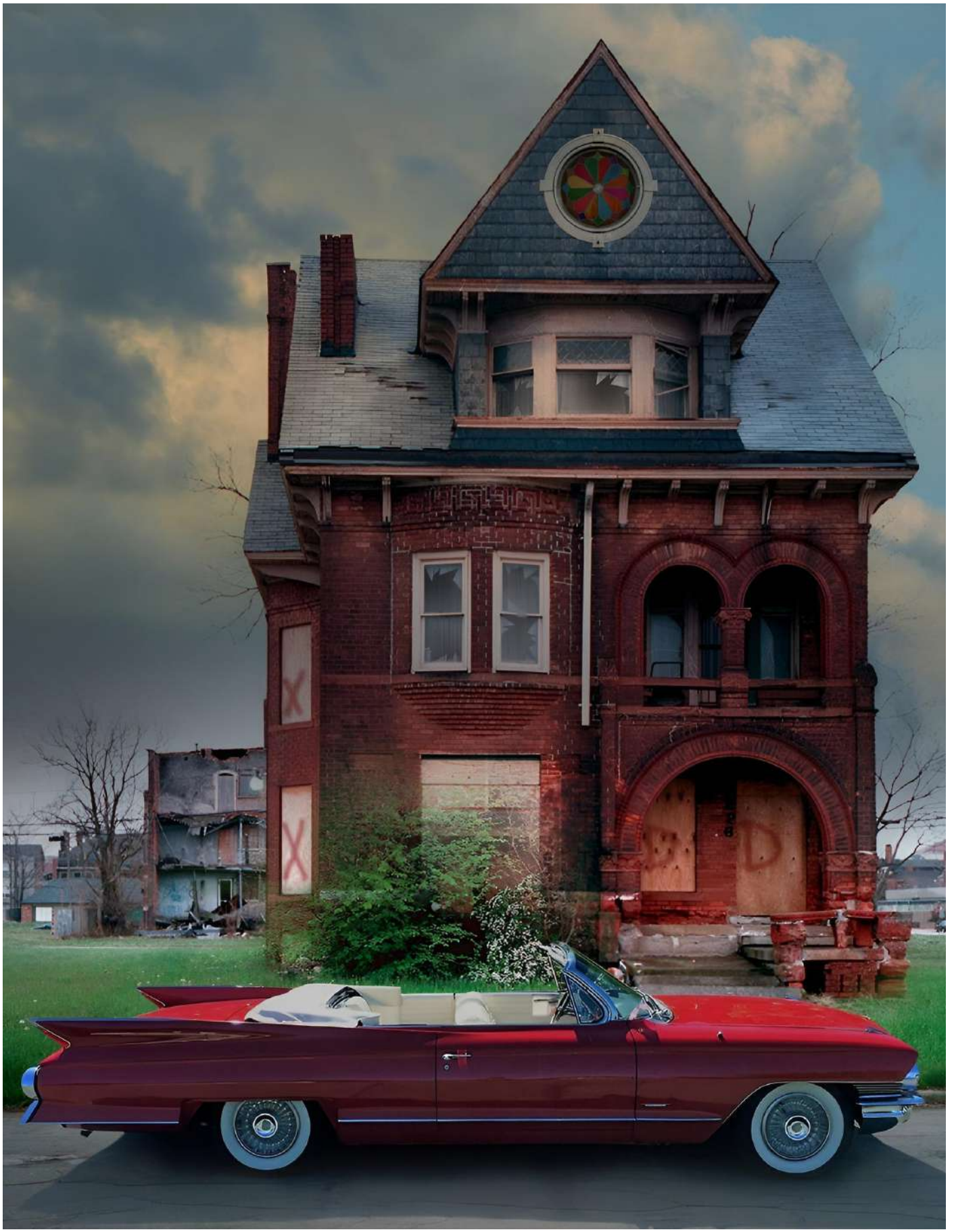
Murdoc: A digital panic attack.

2D: Instead of having me in the video, our director Giorgio Testi suggested using a shadow puppet of my profile shot since the track wasn't really about us, and rather, the collective minds of the left after that night. It's terrifying being an outsider looking in, the concept of having such an unhinged character in office which has governing influence over essentially the entire world, and not being able to voice my opinion on that. I imagine it was as frustrating for all of Europe as it was for us.

Murdoc: Shut up 2D.

The video was released on UPROXX's YouTube channel and hit #1 on YouTube's trending tab within the first 24 hours of release.

Murdoc: Now, that's how you make a comeback.



Chapter 8
Bass Tzar Run

'With the holograms beside me
I'll dance alone tonight
In a mirrored world, are you beside me?
All my life…'

Saturnz Barz

During the final leg of production for Humanz, Gorillaz prepared for what would be their most ambitious music video to date. Saturnz Barz, a full 360° extravaganza, topped with CGI in eye popping 4K from the likes of lifetime long production company Passion Pictures in collaboration with Google Spotlight Stories.

Murdoc: 4K?! That's four more than I've had today.

The three groups, led by recurrent director Jamie Hewllet, began mapping out plans for their huge digital storm of a comeback.

Murdoc: This was it, our six minute splash back into the hearts and minds of children everywhere. Hallelujah Money was the warm-up, the prologue if you will, but this was going to be our grand comeback to the world, me and the others together again, in one massive music video which would blow you and your nans socks off.

Russel: We flew over to this abandoned disused house in Detroit that Jamie found for us on Ghougle maps. Considering the Humanz record has such an American sound to it, we figured we would record our first proper promo in the D.

2D: In the what?

Murdoc: The house itself is on Hendrie Street, right behind a small Wayne County road yard. Property records show it was built in 1905.

Murdoc: She's a beauty. Nobody had been using it for years though, you had used Johnny's and needles scattered around the garden and a couple of crisp packets floating in the wind. Found out later the house was owned by a man named Norbert P. Rockefeller, who dabbled in the occult stock market - the real black market. Things went south so he put his soul down for collateral. And, very sadly, he got dragged down to Hell. Always read the fine print, Norbert. I've noticed we have a habit of sprucing up old abandoned locations; graveyards, landfill sites, ocean garbage patches. So y'know, just seemed natural.

2D: Maybe we'd be a lot less pessimistic if we stopped choosing such depressing places to live.

Jamie began mapping out storyboards, and as development grew, the scope of the project began to come into focus, eight hundred thousand dollars worth of focus. Murdoc, gracefully I might add, left the bill to their new pals over at Google.

Murdoc: 'How did we get in contact with the good people over at Google?' I hear you ask. Well, they must've been noesying around at my recent searches for 'greatbigfuckofftechgiantswillingto-producemylatestmusicvideo.com' because they reached out to us.

2D: Where do you keep finding these websites?

Noodle: The video in the end cost us around $800,000 to make and we had about one hundred people working on it. It took us about three months to get this video ready, we wanted everything to be intricate and precise. so we were pulling out all the stops for this promo.

Murdoc: Chump change if you ask me, Google should've left a tip.

Russel: We sprinkled some nods to our older work as background cameos throughout the video, specifically, to our previous video Do Ya Thing.

Murdoc: The whole production surrounding that single was a total cock up behind the scenes. As far as we're concerned that video never happened, erasing it from the history books like Tiananmen Square.

Noodle: We wanted this video to rewrite the ending of Do Ya Thing while still somewhat acknowledging that it happened, since 'Stylo' we had this continuing narrative told throughout our videos, we wanted Saturnz Barz to put an end to said narrative to get things back to how we used to do them. At the end of Do Ya Thing, we were evicted from Wobble Street, at the beginning of this video we're looking for a new place to call home. That was our way of, how do you say, turning the leaf.

The video starts with our four arriving in a 1961 Cadillac convertible whilst their single "Ascension" blasts from the radio. They get out of the car, drop their various snacks and smokes, and arrive at the front door of their new home.

Murdoc: This was just outside Detroit, it was our first time on the road in years. To be honest, I immediately missed prison. The plot starts with 2D whining about being hungry, and Russ wanting a nap. I had to pull over for a pitstop to shut them up.

Russel: The camera crew had already started filming before we'd pulled up, that shot was one take.

Murdoc rings the doorbell, only for a freak storm to surround them. The door gently swings open. As they walk in, Murdoc comments on the interior of the house being too welcoming and the state of the carpet.

Murdoc: They had three months to set this up. THREE! They could've dusted the place a bit for us, I got dust and cobwebs all over my brand new vegan cuban heels. Remember up to here clear as day, the second we stepped through the door everything goes all fuzzy. Like there was some dark presence screwing with reality. And no! No. I was almost totally sober, before you ask.

Russel suggests that they split up and explore the house.

Murdoc: Great idea Russ, always works out well in horror movies.

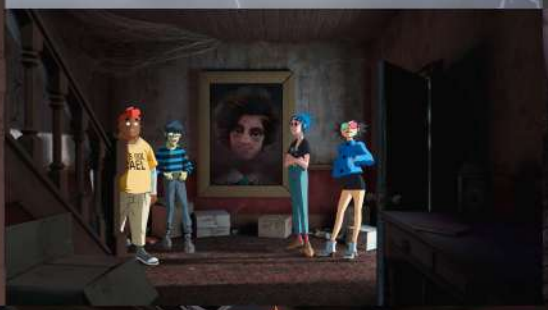
Russel goes to a bedroom to take a nap, 2D heads to the kitchen to find a fridge full of food that opens as he enters, Murdoc goes to the restroom, where he takes-

Murdoc: NO! STOP IT! I am not saying it. I don't care how much paper you throw at my feet. I'm not a performing monkey. I. AM. NOT. SAYING. IT…Looking at it now, it's not the most inviting deep soak ever. But something in that house was messing with our melons. Cos to me it looked heavenly; hot bubbly water, scatter of rose petals, candles, smooth jazz on low…

…and Noodle goes into the basement where she finds a gramophone surrounded by records. As they all partake in their activities, Noodle plays one of the records, then the track "Saturnz Barz" begins to emanate.

Murdoc: And now it gets properly weird, you might want to sit down for this one.

BELOW
Norbert P. Rockefeller
The original owner of the Spirit House



©1976

It's not
RAEL

BASS TZAR RUN

2D finds a large cake which he prepares to eat while a plastic golf figurine comes alive and says, "Press the button to begin" to the viewer. Murdoc sinks underwater in the bathtub, entering a euphoric state of mind as he floats nude in space.

Murdoc: It's not the first inter-dimensional portal I've been through. This was incredibly fun to film, just me and my tidbits hanging about for the camera. It was a gorgeous sight mate, really, a liberating experience. Some of you may recall this vid when it first went out without the censoring but it basically blew up the internet so they covered me up.

Noodle: Fortunately we managed to pixelate it before too many people saw.

Murdoc: Haven't you heard about free speech? Applies to nudity as well.

Russel: I don't think you got that right man, besides, that applies to art, not…that.

Murdoc: Fans were furious about the pixelation actually. Someone called MadMurdy69 wrote loads of hate in the comments, demanding my dragon to be released.

2D: Isn't MadMurdy69 your YouTube channel?

Murdoc: We're done here.

Russel is tormented by a black worm-like monster with a large head, arms for dreadlocks, and one eye.

Murdoc: Uncanny how these critters seemed to know Popcaan's lyrics, we actually hired these two extras from the same agency that hooked us up with those zombie gorillas that we had back in the Clint Eastwood video, they did a fantastic job because to me those two sound exactly like Popcaan, or maybe that's just the magic of video editing.

Noodle is kidnapped by a cycloptic worm-like creature with a digital mouth projected under its eye. While food begins launching out of the fridge, slamming 2D onto the floor and shoving itself down his throat.

Murdoc: Could be one of those new smart fridges. It knows exactly what you want and just fires it straight into your face.

Both Spirit House demons continue reciting Popcaan's lyrics while harassing the characters as Murdoc flies through a field of asteroids with the planet Saturn in the background.

Murdoc: That floating scene, they had me on these wires see, and I was able to fly around the set! Like a little Peter Pan. It was great! Till they had this fake boulder crush my nuts. That hurt like hell. I can't go one video without my crown jewels getting busted, can I? Someone's getting fired for that…

As 2D chimes in to perform his chorus, the demons continue tormenting Russel and Noodle. Murdoc then saddles a miniature version of the spirit house as it zooms through some kind of time vortex.

Murdoc: As you can imagine, that ride was incredibly uncomfortable. Slate roof tiles are terribly chafing.

Later, we see the band all traumatised and terrified from the events they'd witnessed.

Russel: Those acting coaches Murdoc got us when we were trying to get that film off the ground were finally paying off.

Murdoc: That's the sign of a good night, that. It's not a proper party unless you're shivering and hugging yourself at the end…

As light fills the house, the storm disappears. The video ends with the weather changing back to sunny and the house returning to normal. The band is shown in the car, with them all agreeing to get breakfast. They drive off while 'Andromeda' and later 'We Got The Power', both play on the radio.

Murdoc: Morning after the night before, feeling reenergized. World's our oyster once more.

Russel: This might be my favourite Gorillaz promo we've done to date. Looking back on it, it was just really well put together, and was just really fun to film. Well, fun until Murdoc stripped down to his nuts 'n' bolts.

2D: We've evolved from zombie gorillas and ghost rappers, to talking pizzas and alien rappers… would you consider that an improvement? Just the same old bollocks to me.

The Saturnz Barz music video set the record for the biggest debut of a 360° music video in YouTube's history. Accumulating 3 million views within 48 hours of release.

Murdoc: Not much of a shock to be fair, this was the first proper Gorillaz music video that had been released in five years, and it was in 360 as well! That just has record breaking in the title.

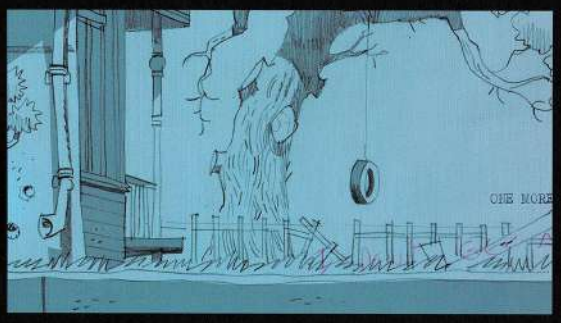
'Saturnz Barz' reached number one on the US Bubbling Under Hot 100 chart, and number five on the US Hot Rock Songs chart, while charting at #87 on the UK Singles chart.

It was now official…the globe straddling group of Gorillaz were back.

Russel: That spirit house really fit with our new vibe, ended up setting up shop there for a while before we headed out on tour, worked basically like our third base of operations.

Murdoc: Fourth if you count-

Russel: Nobody's counting the fighting academy.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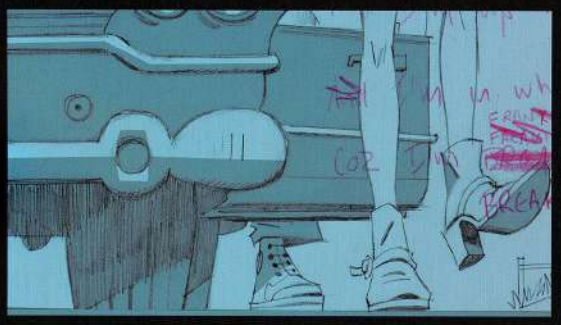
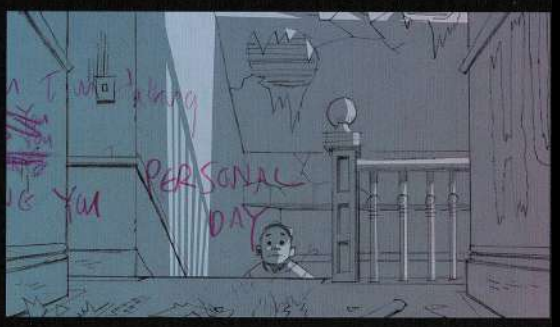



PERSONAL
DAY

I'M IN A STARIN BAR
I'VE GOT GRIT AND I'M A
SATURN S
AND SHE JUST A HEARTBREAKER
SHE'S JUST
STARIN THE GHOST TO THE PIPE
ICK OUT SEVEN LATER
YOU ARE TH E LOVED ONE
H EARTB REAKER

PERSONAL
DAY

Humanz Singlez Released

Murdoc: Success! We'd pulled it off for a fourth time, Saturnz Barz set the expectations sky-high, but you know what? I had a Jetpack AND I was on top of Everist AND I own a space shuttle AND Elon Musk is a good mate of mine. So back off, yeah? Ed 'Murdoc' Mitchel Niccals is preparing for takeoff, straight to the top of the charts and hearts of children everywhere YESSS!

Right…

Over the course of 2017, six side singles were released in promotion of both Humanz and its B-Side counterpart, Super Deluxe, to help boost up-

Murdoc: RAZZMATAZZ!...

…uh…yeah sure. To… razzmatazz… the new Gorillaz album. Am I using that correctly?

Murdoc: Er, I think so.

March 23rd 2017 *We Got The Power single is released*

Russel: This one was essential, because when you put it into perspective our two previous releases, Hallelujah Money and Saturnz Barz, are pretty bleak outlooks on the modern landscape. We Got The Power was our way of saying 'Hey, it ain't all doom n' gloom!'

March 23rd 2017 *Ascension single is released*

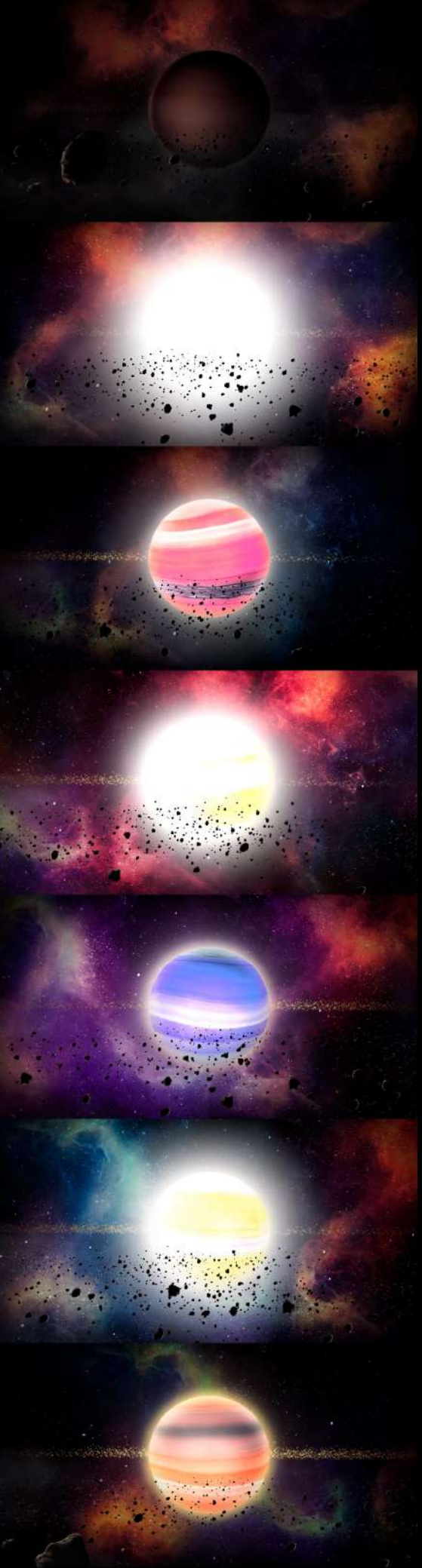
Murdoc: You know, back when I was in school there was this kid called Terry, and he had these disgusting little rounded glasses that he kept on a chain. Everyday Terry would come to school with his packed lunch, scoff it all down like the fat slimey creature he was, and then right, he'd refuse to wash his hands.
So Terry would be walking down the hallway with fingers that looked like they'd gone bin diving earlier that day, make his way into the D&D club, and just sit there with shit all over his disgusting greasy glasses. And that kid 2D, reminds me a lot of how you've turned out. Filth, with an undertone of undeniable genius.

2D: Really?

Murdoc: Shut it you little cun-

March 23rd 2017 *Andromeda single is released*

Murdoc: Self explanatory really…we had to, unfortunately, confirm that we hadn't swapped our singer out, as much as I'd love to, as much as I've pushed that idea to the absolute edges of the cosmos, there's still one track with IT taking centre stage… That's the real price of stardom, I'd take a quickie in the supermarkets disableds making it to the front page of the local paper over this any day.



April 6th 2017 *Let Me Out single is released*

Murdoc: This one's a little pellet of…RAZZLE-DAZZLE!

The single reached #7 on the US Hot Rock & Alternative Songs chart, #15 on the US Bubbling Under Hot 100 Singles, and #78 on the UK Downloads Chart.

April 24th 2017 *The Apprentice single is released*

Murdoc: I'd like to thank Clara Amfo at BBC Radio 1 after deciding to name this one tune of the week, but I'm not going to.

2D: Thank you!

Murdoc: The song is good. Everyone liked it.

December 1st 2017 *Andromeda D.R.A.M. Special single is released*

Noodle: The day this single released, it was after our performance in Manchester Arena, there was a sickness going through us all around that time and it seemed it was my turn to spend the evening in bed. I remember waking in a daze hearing the song faintly in the room next door as I stared out of the window. The sky pure black. It was like my little square room was a space ship drifting precariously through the empty ether, and way way off, this beacon of hope, the song, a signal. Life beyond.

Printworks

March 23rd 2017 *Printworks show is announced*

On the same day of the release of Saturnz Barz and the announcement of Humanz, Gorillaz announced a live concert to be performed at London's Printworks, their first proper show since 2010.

Russel: Saturnz Barz launched us straight back into the musical stratosphere, we had the entire industry eating out of our hands. Because of that, I feel the bar was set pretty high for our live shows. The pressure was on man, we had around a month to pull together a band big enough to tackle something as daunting as Humanz.

Murdoc: AND! We would make sure that WE, US, THE REAL GORILLAZ, would play these gigs, no dressing rooms, no drunken benders, no deportation, nothing…well, there was still one manner to take care of.

Russel: The album got away from us, we never really took into consideration how huge of a performance we'd have to pull off to make Humanz live work. If it was gonna work, we needed backup. I called up Jeff Wooton, asked what he could throw together for us. He brought in a couple noteworthy people from his last band, The Heavy Seas. Seye Adelekan, Mike Smith, Damon Albarn.

Murdoc: This is so humiliating… They took the spotlight from us during our last tour, and now we're crawling back to them to help us with this one? I'm never gonna be able to escape them lot, am I? If some crooner wants to honour my art in a tribute act, I try to take it as a compliment. It's the burden both Elvis and I have to bear. Jesus had the same problem. All those jokers claiming to be the second coming of Christ. It goes with the territory of being a messiah, musical or otherwise. We're used to it.

2D: That wasn't it though, we didn't just leave it at Gorillaz and The Heavy Seas (snorts) that would be ridiculous.

Noodle: Russel is an amazing drummer, but he's no Tony Allen.

Russel: Ain't nobody who can compare to that man.

Noodle: That's why we had to bring in two additional percussionists, Karl Vanden Bossche and Gabriel Wallace.

Murdoc: That wasn't where it ended though, I mean this is a truly tragic story. 2D, the poor sod, he's…well, he's getting old isn't he? Can't hit the notes as well as he used to, had to bring on a choir to help him out.

Noodle: The Humanz Choir we call them. Ade Omotayo, Angel Silvera, Marcus Anthony Johnson, Matthew Allen, Michelle Ndegwa, Petra Luke and Rebecca Freckleton.

Murdoc: But it still didn't sound right, so in the end we had Damon lead and poor 2D was left at the back with a triangle.

2D: I wasn't that bad. It was nice taking a backseat as the vocalist actually, doing backing vocals is much less straining. But when I looked back at the footage the next day, you couldn't hear me at all.

Murdoc: Oh yeah, I may have tripped over your microphone cord and unplugged it by accident. Soz.

Russel: With these dudes our sound was way more confident, but we still weren't happy. This would be our first live performance together since 2006 for our BRITs performance, so I'm sure you can see where I'm coming from when I say that we had a bit more than just a little stage fright. We needed a workaround. Humanz is about…well, take a guess. We didn't want or need the focus on us, you know? So we're trying to phase ourselves out of being front and centre. In fact, I don't think we were ever supposed to be thrust into the limelight when making this record.

2D: We did a mix of what we've done in the past, like, got this great big cinema screen on stage and set up all our instruments behind it.

Russel: Got all the collaborators upfront. Gorillaz is a whole group of people working together to make great music, you could have hundreds of people talking to you about this project, but there's usually only us four. That was the point of us disappearing at the back of our shows.

Murdoc: For me I think this has sort of turned into a bit of a monster…I think that's the reason why we want to sort of step back a bit. It's getting out of control. I think being behind a screen is the first step for us to phase ourselves out of the picture. Next time we might be cardboard cutouts, and then after that we won't exist at all, we'll pull out.

2D: Really?

Murdoc: Nah. It's just budget mate.

2D: Oh… yeah that makes sense, I guess.

March 24th 2017 *Gorillaz perform at Printworks, London, UK*

Tickets for the gig could be won through the official Gorillaz webstore. All proceeds from the show - which had the compulsory charity donation of £5 - went to support The White Helmets.

Murdoc: The White Helmets are this organisation that formed during the Syrian Civil War. We actually lent the organisation our unreleased Plastic Beach track, Crashing Down, for their documentary. I went to Syria, I had their sound on my record. Of course I wanted to help.

2D: Right, where's the punchline then?

Murdoc: There isn't one. I don't joke about this stuff. This war as of now has been raging on for two years, and it'll probably keep going for years to come. People are dying and they need our help. If you can do something about it, then do it.

Murdoc: Donate to the White Helmets, help a family get back on their feet. Just because the media doesn't cover it doesn't mean it's not happening. When we went and played there in 2010, I really saw the beauty of that country, despite its militarian flaws. I felt as though it was something worth fighting for, but we don't do war, we do peace. So since we had the chance to get this charity in front of peoples faces, I ran with it.

A majority of guests from Humanz appeared here at this live show. Peven Everett, Posdnuos, Azekel, Danny Brown, Kelea, Anthony Hamiliton, Pusha T, Jamie Principle, Zebra Katz, Kali Uchis, Benjamin Clementine, Jenny Beth, & Noel Gallagher. Alongside these collaborators, also appeared some special guests, Jean-Michel Jarre, Graham Coxon, and Teren Delvon Jones.

2D: Ey Noodle, didn't you used to have a crush on that Graham bloke?

Noodle: I don't think anyone needed to know about that…

Russel: Teren on Clint Eastwood was really great, I think he hooked up with some of our previous collaborators before, so we sorta knew him through mutuals. Something about his voice was so familiar though…he sounded a lot like my departed friend, Del The Ghost Rapper, and he also did virtually the same rap on Clint Eastwood…huh…

Murdoc: You there yet mate? Don't overthink it.

The gig was met with overall positive reviews from critics, once more, Gorillaz had cracked the live scene.

Murdoc: (yawns) Same old, same old…we've done this bit before, the gig was great, everyone loved it, first row had their clothes ripped off it was that incredible. Next section.

Grand Opening of Spirit House

April 11th 2017 *Spirit House, the gang's new home, was officially rendered fully accessible to anyone in possession of their Mixed Reality App.*

Murdoc: We streamlined the whole thing since the days of web plugins, point your camera, tap an icon, and boom. You're in our new home. It erases the line of reality and Gorillaz more than anything else we've ever put out before.

But that wasn't all it had to offer. How do you welcome back the world's greatest virtual band after a seven-year hiatus? You put on the world's most mind-blowing virtual house party.

April 21st through to April 23rd, 2017 *Gorillaz premiered their new record through the Mixed Reality App. Fans and the press alike went Bananaz.*

Murdoc: How's this for innovation? A Humanz listening party hosted by me through the app, but, and here's the catch, you have to go outside!

Noodle: It was like a game of musical Pokemon Go, fans could locate the spirit house using their phone cameras at over 500 locations worldwide. When they found one it would invite them to the 'Humanz Listening Party', this is how we officially debuted the album.

Murdoc: Wicked!

The Gorillaz Mixed Reality App was a global success, being the number #1 most downloaded in 30+ countries, 130k+ Instals in the first 24 hours, and 126k fans attending the house party.

Murdoc: Nice way to retain the title of the world's most cutting edge band…

From the app's launch, a total of four quizzes based around the band could be found within their rooms of the Spirit House. On completion, fans would be placed into a sweepstake for tickets to their upcoming concerts.

Russel: It'd been so long, we wanted to give something back to the fans who'd always appreciated our work. And as a thank you for their patience.

Murdoc: I only green-lit it because it made for some good press.

April 5th 2017 *Gorillaz in collaboration with SONOS announce various pop up attractions based on Spirit House.*

Continuing to climb up the corporate ladder, Gorillaz teamed up with Sonos, the home sound system, to create four replica Spirit Houses in celebration of the band's highly anticipated forthcoming new album, 'Humanz'. These thrilling spaces saw fans enter the band's virtual home through an immersive, high-fidelity experience in select cities, bringing the world of Gorillaz to life visually and sonically with the new Sonos PLAYBASE, the, at the time, latest addition to Sonos' family of home cinema products.

Noodle: This is something that has always been on the bucket list, allowing fans to come see where we eat, breathe, sleep, meditate, smoke, and well, just about anything else you can put your mind to.

2D: Fertilise?

Noodle: Yeah, that too.

Murdoc: A concept we had early on but penultimately scrapped was to sorta copy what those blokes over at Disneyland do. You see what Disney does is they pump out various smells throughout the park, cotton candy, popcorn, caramel…and they use these smells to entice customers to spend more, eat more, just generally consume more, like rabid dogs, ever adding onto Disney's fat stacks. So I was thinking why don't we do our own equivalent of that, yeah? Get the public riled up and ready to spend like it's May 21st 2011. We pump out various aromas in the Spirit House so fans can get that true Gorillaz experience. You would've been able to smell fags, sick, old tinnies, rotting bananas, at one point I was thinking of somehow condensing my odour and pumping that through…SONOS thought it would've been a bad idea for our attractions to reek of someone cooking turds so we threw that one in the bin early on, I blame that idea being scrapped for this collaboration falling flat on its face cheeks.

Transforming raw spaces in several cities around the world into Gorillaz Spirit Houses. These spaces included a real-life manifestation of the Spirit House lounge and cinema, offering fans the opportunity to dive deeper into their world through music, physical installations, and projection mapping technology, along with an early sneak preview to some songs off the band's new record.

Russel: This was something extraordinary we were able to create, we couldn't have pulled this off with something like Kong or Plastic Beach, due to how gigantic both of those locations were, but Spirit House was a building more so on a smaller scale, so it was easier for us to condense that atmosphere into an experience, like a real fairgrounds haunted house, only the monsters in this one are real.

Noodle: We were only able to fit seven people into the experience at a time, as our main goal with this experience was to create a very personalised and custom experience for our fans. I think the most complex thing was that we had to do both New York and Berlin at the same time.

Russel: We literally had to build duplicate sets, find duplicate props, duplicate equipment in each of those cities. With the timeline being approximately five weeks made it excruciating.

GORILLAZ
A MIXED REALITY MOBILE APP
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Noodle: In the first room we took a pan vision of our real home, and from that we had Cornerstone and Pro-Ject examine every detail, from a poster on the wall to a coffee table to a chair.

Murdoc: They can examine my boxers if they like, good looking bunch aren't they?

Russel: That took up most of our time, finding all these things, buying them, trading for them, shipping them to New York and Berlin. Total nightmare.

2D: Within the Cinema what we had was these two visuals for Andromeda and Saturnz Barz produced by Block9 on this massive 180° screen. It was like you were really in the experience.

Murdoc: You were in the bloody experience! Whoever's writing this book isn't qualified enough to write a book…I mean a press piece on Pinterest maybe…

April 20th - April 23rd 2017 *Spirit House experience runs in Brooklyn, New York*

April 27th - April 30th 2017 *Spirit House experience runs in Berlin, Germany*

May 4th - May 6th 2017 *Spirit House experience runs in Amsterdam, Netherlands*

May 31st - June 4th 2017 *Spirit House experience runs in Shanghai, China*

Dmitri Siegel, Sonos VP of Global Brand: Gorillaz have always been inspiring artists who ignore the limitations of any medium or format. The launch of their first album in seven years is such a big moment for Gorillaz fans and we're excited to invite people all over the world to experience it using Sonos.

By the end of the collaboration, all 4 locations garnered a total of 5,008 guests.

Murdoc: Eh…could've done better.

Sounds like Gorillaz

April 18th 2017 *Gorillaz partner with Pandora Radio*

Pandora Radio, created by Tim Westergran, Will Glaser, and Tom Kraft, was looking to make a splash in the modern music scene, and who better to collaborate with than 'the world's biggest band' ten days before their next album was released. The four of them produced their own 'Sounds like' playlist, featuring artists such as Radiohead, Daft Punk, Phantogram, Apex Twin, Le Tigre, and many others. These playlists were promoted with a brand new, live-action Ident featuring our heroes racing each other down a vibrant country road.

Murdoc: We had to be discreet about filming this one, I had my licence revoked years back, as for 2D, well he never learned to drive did he?

2D: I could never get comfortable in the driver's seat cos my legs were too long. That and I never met the standards for driving in the UK because of my head injuries, no problems in America though.

Murdoc: Noodle had no problem, she learned to drive back in-

2D: Who are the standards anyways? Are they like the Specials?

Murdoc: You're like the specials in a care home you twirp

Russel: Easy muds

Murdoc: Relax…you didn't write that down, did you? It was nice taking the ol' Camaro out for a spin again, still as sleek as she was when we pinched her off Womack for the Stylo video. A friend of mine, Jakob Klub, up in Denmark had been taking good care of her while I was banged up after Plastic Beach.

Noodle: In the build-up to our newest release we did our best to actively try and diversify our fan's palettes musically as we had so many collaborations lined up. It also gave us an opportunity to share what we'd all been enjoying and listening to in our absence. From YouTube Playlists to Spotify, Pandora. You name it if it had a playlist option, we carefully assembled a listening experience on there at one point or another.

Russel: Massive Attack, Pretty Lights, Air, Lcd Soundsystem. We had it all going on.

Murdoc: NEXT!!!

The Lenz

ABOVE
Murdoc & 2D attending Youtube Space interview with Mistajam

April 21st 2017 *Humanz Street Party is held in Brussels, Belgium.*

To tie in with the online listening party, and to boost album morale, a street party was held in the town centre in Brussels.

Noodle: We had four artists who painted their own interpretations of the Humanz album cover on these huge canvases. The entire process was live streamed on Brussels Facebook page for fans all over the world to see!

Murdoc: I just wasted two hours of my life watching a bunch of people shart on a canvas making a mockery of my own portrait.

Noodle: Parts of the city were also painted pink in collaboration with Telekom for a new app we were about to release.

Murdoc: More on that later, but enough of all that. Let's talk about what everyone really came to this section for…oh that's right, you know what I am talking about!

April 20th 2017 *2D and Murdoc are interviewed by Mistajam at the Youtube Space in London.*

Murdoc: So while Noodle was off doing promotional stuff over in Belgium, and Russ was having a little vacation for himself in Brooklyn. D and I head down to the Youtube Space in London to do some interviews with a bunch of press folk. Now you'd think this would just be a bunch of horse piss. But here's the catch. Me and 2D, would be sitting there, in person! That's right! IN PERSON. Being able to shake their hands, look into their eyes, all that.

2D: I'm actually really gay. (*Edited by M. F. Niccals*)

How did it feel to be interviewed in the real world?

2D: It felt weird.

Murdoc: Strange.

2D: Quite strange. But the air is a bit… dusty.

Murdoc: Yeah the air is dirty, yeah, it's not as clean, and pure, and clinical.

2D: So we just spent the whole day getting interviewed. NME, Radio X, Index, Telekom, Spider's Web-

Murdoc: Gossip Milk, ForeSkin Industries. All those geeks. We did a live-stream on YouTube with Mistajam where we answered fan questions.

2D: But that one with Telekom, that one we did later in the day back at the Spirit House. This polite German named Hans-Christian Schwingen came in and asked us about a new Gorillaz collaboration app that was coming out, called The Lenz.

So what made you choose to work with Telekom on a new Gorillaz app?

Murdoc: Well they're nice people, we like them.

2D: And they give us the best Wi-Fi reception.

Murdoc: Oh yes, oh yes. At least three bars, I think?

Tell us a bit more about the Lenz app.

Murdoc: Oh the app, the app. Everyone is just dying to hear about the app.

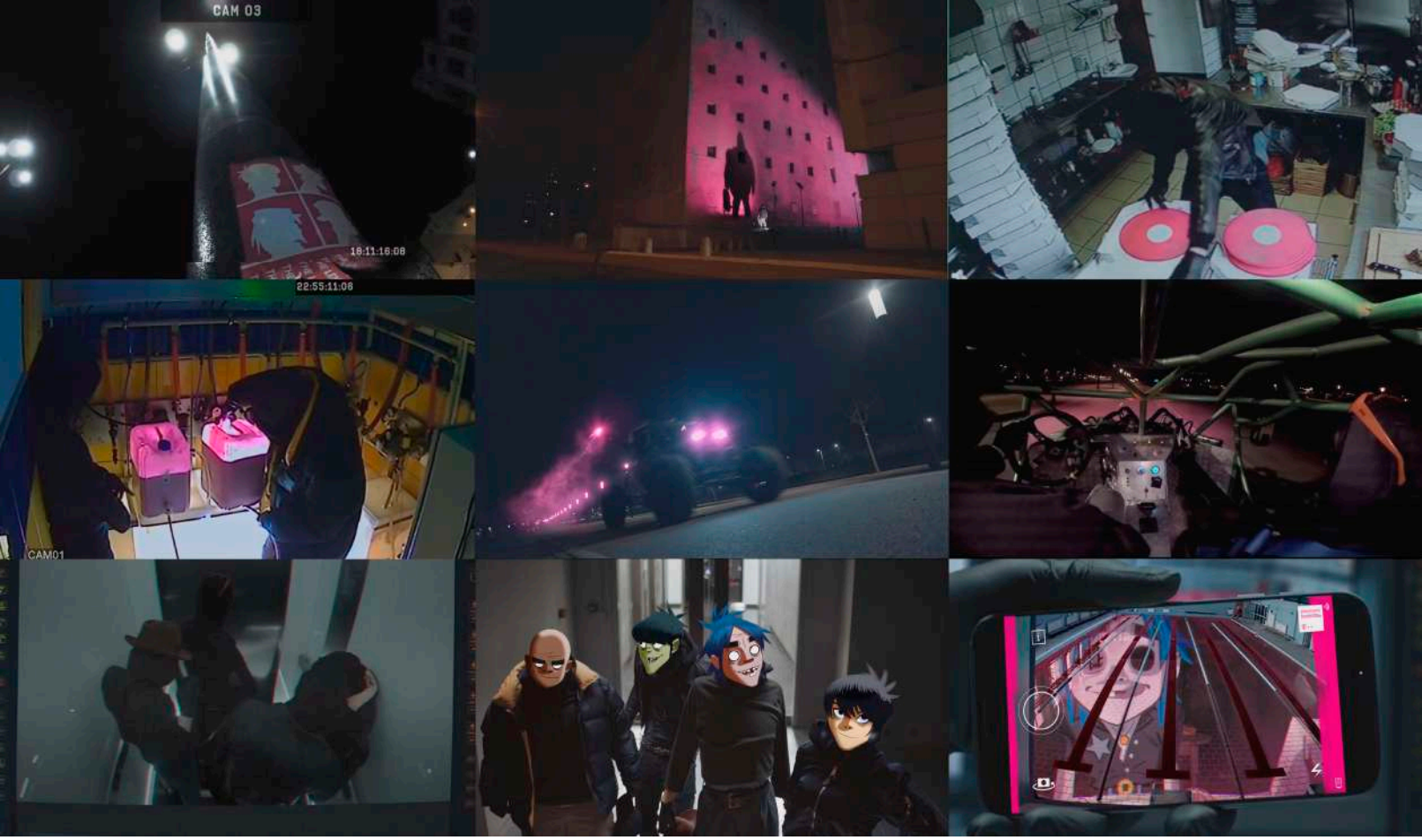
2D: Basically, this Lenz app we've done with Telekom and anything that's Magenta you can hold the Gorillaz app over the magenta and you can go into our world. It's not anything crazy, it's really just these videos of me and Murdoc acting all buddy buddy. It's at least nicer than Murdoc's world, it's more like my world which is a bit more user friendly.

Murdoc: I am very mostly visual.

2D: I mean…I'm not sure if this is breaking any contracts or anything. The whole magenta thing is kind of shit if you ask me. I mean really, how often do you see the colour magenta on a daily basis? I don't see it at all. It's a miracle Hans was wearing magenta socks during our demonstration, but really, who wears magenta socks!

Murdoc: The Germans!!!

2D: We also did this short promotional video, it was the four of us going around t his city at night, turning everything magenta. Cars, walls, vinyl records, peoples hair, skateboards. That one was fun to shoot.



Murdoc: At least this shithole had some magenta they could use for the app. 2D is really gay.

2D: Very insightful.

Murdoc: Well personally, in my opinion, I think this was a half decent collab, for once I'm not ashamed to have my name attached. I'm not so…hip with technology these days, but from what I could tell. This app was our way of breaking the rules of reality, coming through your iPhone, slapping you in the face and telling you to buy our new album. It was brilliant! Something magical, like…

2D: A wizards portal?

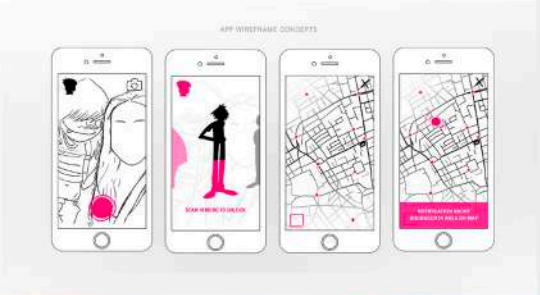
Murdoc: Huh?

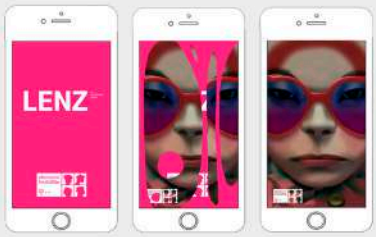
2D: A wizards portal?

Murdoc: I don't know what that means.

2D: It's uh…that thing you used to say.

Murdoc: I still don't know what that means.


APP WIREFRAME CONCEPTS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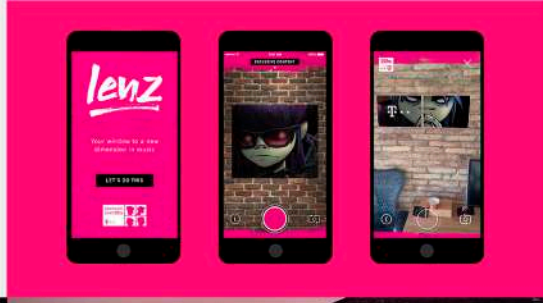
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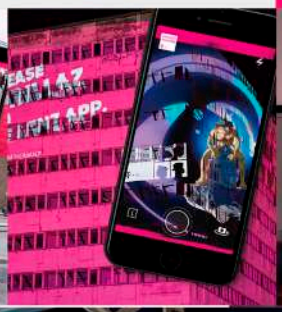
RELEASE
GORILLAZ
WITH
THE LENZ



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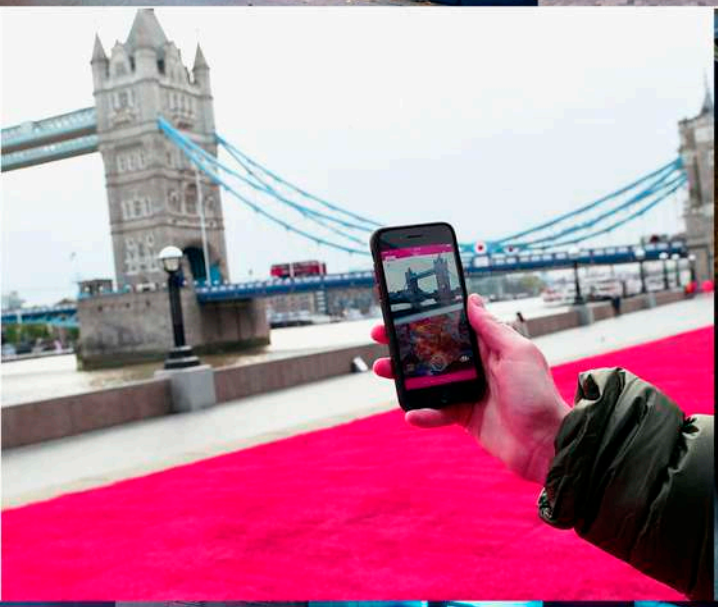

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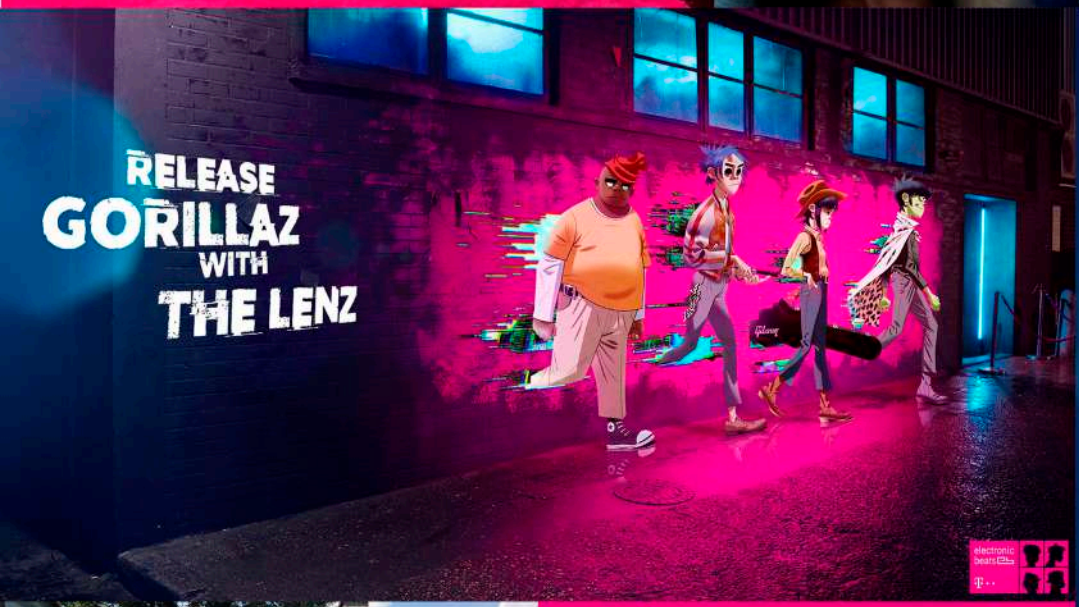
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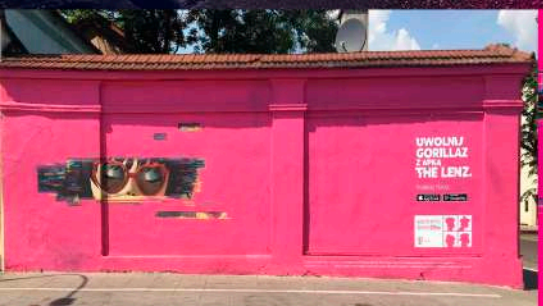
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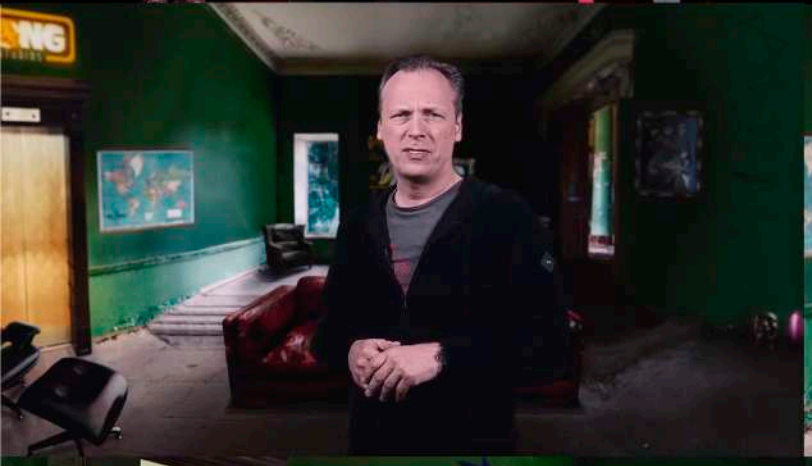
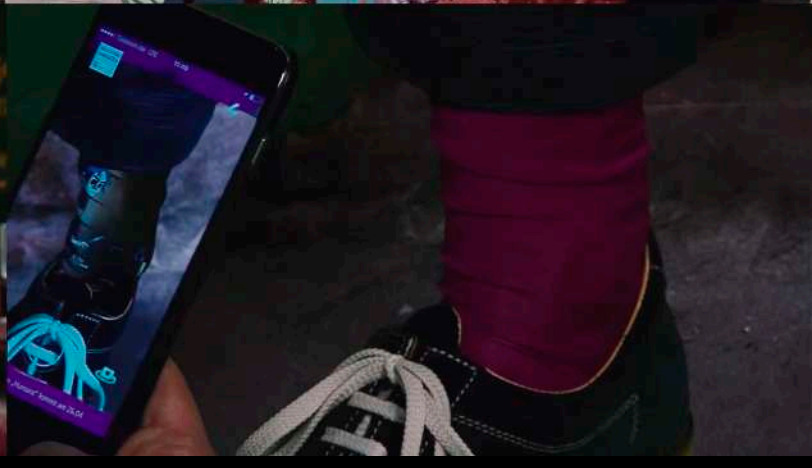




Chapter 9
We Are Still Humanz

'I get dropped from where I belong
I take my pills and I get in the mood
And I take five to get it to load in
Even in the place
And I get my jeans on right
And sit in the rows and
Inside, I live in a cage and I'

Humanz Released

April 28th 2017 *Humanz is released*

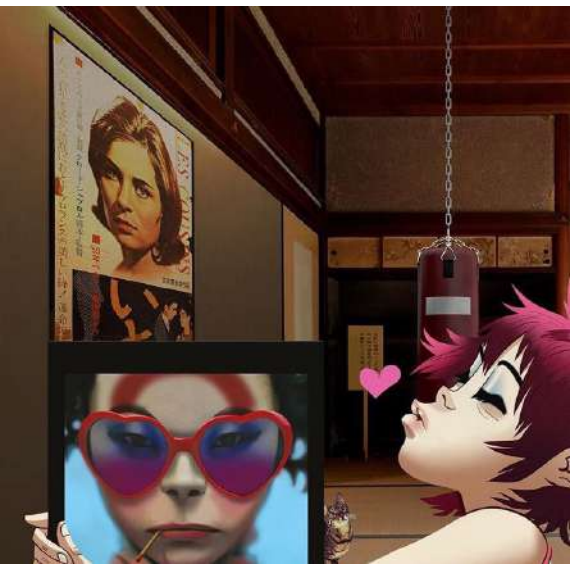
In the United Kingdom, the album debuted at number two on the UK Albums Chart. It also debuted at number one in Austria, Switzerland, and at number three in Belgium. While in the United States, Humanz debuted at number two on the US Billboard 200 behind Kendrick Lamar's Damn, with 140,000 album-equivalent units, of which 115,000 were pure album sales. Accumulating in 650,000 album sales worldwide.

The Guardian, 27th April, "Humanz demonstrates the pros and cons of Albarn's musical restlessness. As usual, he displays exquisite taste in collaborators – everyone from fast-rising rapper DRAM to dancehall singer Popcaan to old-school Chicago house legend Jamie Principle – and an impressive ability to get the best out of them by throwing them into unlikely circumstances. It's tempting to suggest that Submission is precisely the kind of out-and-out pop song that alt-R&B vocalist Kelela's career has thus far lacked. Grace Jones sounds particularly magnificent improvising a vocal around a post-punk-y distorted guitar line, with Albarn singing in blank-eyed cockney Syd Barrett mode on Charger, while the conjunction of De La Soul, a relentless distorted techno beat and synthesiser, courtesy of Jean-Michel Jarre, on Momentz is dazzling."

Russel: Man we got like thirty people who worked on this record, press needs to stop stapling Albarn's name to the front of every one of our projects.

Murdoc: Yeah this bit is getting old now, almost twenty years old. Pack it in.

Mixmag, 2nd June, "It's hard to be cynical in the face of such joy-inducing music and theatricality. Fast-forward to the present day and Damon's all-star band are back again with De La Soul and a whole new class of reprobates new (Vince Staples, Popcaan, Danny Brown and Kelela) and classic (Peven Everett and Grace Jones).



ABOVE
Love at first sight
"Wow Noodle, quite the narcissist you grew up to be"
MURDOC NICCALS

If you're a fan, you won't be disappointed. 'Momentz' with De La Soul is just as bonkers-brilliant as 'Dare' was before it, while 'Submission' with Kelela and Danny Brown channels Little Dragon at their chorus-busting best. And 'Charger', with a demonic-sounding Jones sparring with Albarn, might be the album's most deranged midnight moment (as well as one of the best things Gorillaz have ever done). The other big standout moment is 'Let Me Out' featuring Mavis Staples and Pusha T, a reminder that only an act like Gorillaz can pull such disparate musical worlds together. Zebra Katz and Jamie Principle pop up on wonky electronic soul jam 'Sex Murder Party' before the LP closes with 'We Got The Power'; featuring Savages singer Jehnny Beth, it's probably the closest that Gorillaz get to a traditional three-minute pop single. "We got the power to do that!" they cry, and for a few minutes, you too will believe that (Hu)man can be a cartoon, a superhero or even a Noodle. If you're new to the zoo, prepare for a 20-track musical trip you won't forget in a hurry."

Noodle: "A Noodle"?

NME, 28th April, "The lawless, world-altering scenario 'Humanz' presents us with is not a poorly attended inauguration but a massive, cross-genre party, composed largely on an iPad by Albarn and illustrated by his mate Jamie Hewlett. Taking a look at the album's futuristic floor-fillers leads to the standout 'Momentz', where De La Soul give hangover advice over a strict marching beat, wriggling synths and a massive, jolting mantra. Or 'Charger', where Grace Jones bares some sphinx-like teeth over a distorted two-note line to declare "I am the ghost / I am the soul / I'm gonna take you for a ride/ No antennas," while Albarn's bewildered vocals splutter out in flouncy dribs and drabs. So strange, it's fantastic."

2D: What's strange is how Momentz and Charger seem to be the most talked about tracks, I wouldn't have expected that.

Despite the general positive reception from critics everywhere, Humanz seemed to receive not the same amount of solace from Gorillaz own fan's. Feeling as though the album wasn't as subtle with its political agenda, there wasn't much of a cohesive narrative, there wasn't enough 2D and the album featured more collaborators than him.

Russel: Well, my response to that is simple. I'm tired of dancing around the fire, it's time to be more direct about the types of issues we tackled on that record.

Russel: We're getting to that point now I think, with things like the Black Lives Matter movement gaining more momentum and finally being acknowledged by the media, but we still have a long fight ahead of us. The record sparked discussion, good and bad, but to me it don't matter if you found it pretentious or too ham-fisted as long as it's got you thinking.

2D: Yeah, go fuck yourselves!

Russel sighs deeply, placing his hand over his eyes in embarrassment.

Noodle: 2D isn't exactly the best candidate when it comes to making art about social issues, Murdoc pushed for more collaborators and it worked in our favour.

Murdoc: Well, I made so many connections in Dungeon Abbey that it'd be a waste not to phone in a few favours, wouldn't it?

Russel: There is a structure, we just kept it loose. The way I'd describe it is like each track is someone's thoughts at this party at the end of the world, some are angry, some remorseful, some disconnected… You can't have a continuing narrative when each thought, or track, is so personal, you feel?

Murdoc: It has as much structure as trying to get a bus ride home on a saturday night. You're pissed, you're angry because you've lost your wallet, and you stink of shit. Thanks number 94.

Russel: I wouldn't go that far.

Murdoc: I woke up in shrewsbury.

HOTEL
66
Sall's
OPEN
DAYS
CANDY
Gibson

Gorillaz on the Small Screen

In the days leading up to the release of Humanz, Gorillaz took it upon themselves to appear on as many TV networks as they possibly could. To let all audiences know about their return and new album.

Russel: We were scheduled to fly to New York to appear on The Late Show With Stephen Colbert. Before we did this though, we hosted an intimate in-store appearance at a Rough Trade record store.

April 25th 2017 *Rough Trade NYC, New York City, New York*

Murdoc: You just said "New York" three times mate. You need a sit down?

2D: Actually the only way to gain access into the show was if you pre ordered a copy of Humanz. So a really good way to boost album sales if you ask me.

Murdoc: This gig was still a bit of a mess though, the venue could only hold about 200 people. There were people lined up outside the venue I think for hours just waiting to get in, a total blood bath. A fan ran up on stage and started doing the rap for Clint Eastwood! It's moments like these I'm glad I'm playing behind a screen and a bunch of fans aren't grabbing at my pants.

2D: Why would anyone be grabbing your pants?

Murdoc gives 2D a scowl look, 2D looks back with a pure expression of derision. Murdoc regains his posture and turns back.

Murdoc: Anyhow, the real important news here is, while we were in New York, we ended up making plans for a TV show. After the show we were approached by this network, Conglomerative United National Television Services. They told us they wanted to sign us for 10 episodes. We went down to their offices, signed contracts and whatnot. But then they never called us again! We wrote some scripts but they just didn't call us for filming or anything like that. Turns out it was an elaborate scheme by some kiddies who just wanted our autographs. They rented out this big office building and dressed up with these large brief coats. All of this just for some autographs! That's insane!

April 27th 2017 *Gorillaz appear on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.*

Unusually enough, Gorillaz failed to show up to this live appearance (wouldn't be the first time), leaving Damon and his live band to take the solo helm once more.

Damon Albarn: Hi, it's Damon Albarn of Gorillaz and you're about to see what it's like to be in a band playing on the late show. I'm playing with the band today because Murdoc and the rest of Gorillaz are lost somewhere in New York, or just aren't showing up to do their day job, while I stay here and do all the work for them.

Murdoc: FUCK YOU DAMON! FUCK YOU!

So? Where were the Gorillaz band then?

Murdoc: Let's see if our fellow friends and cohorts can answer that for us.

Pusha T: They are probably at one of my favourite restaurants, it's a fish spot called Famous Fish. They're definitely going to this place to get this food that I've been waiting to get all day, and since I can't get there, they're definitely going to get that, they're probably going to meet me later.

Murdoc: Why would we ever do that for you? And they say I have an ego…

Melanie Charles, The Humanz Choir: I think the Gorillaz are chilling in a loft in Bushwick right now.

Murdoc: Nah.

Peven Everett: They seem like, the places that people pass by the most but don't pay very much attention to because they pass by so many times.

Murdoc: Uh-...that was actually right. DING DING DING, WINNER WINNER! Good on you Peven. Would you like the cheque now or should I mail it to you?

The cartoon band finally made their way to the studio, but passed through security and the front doors at the worst possible moment.

Murdoc: I walk into the Ed Sullivan Theater right, they're playing 'Feel Good Inc', and who do I see on the big screen, rapping Pos's bit, Stephen Colbert…that son of a bitch. I'm gone for one show! ONE SHOW! And Stephen Tyrone Colbert, American comedian, writer, producer, political commentator, actor, and television host…is doing the rap…

Murdoc twirls his cigarette, and looks up.

Murdoc: I'm not entirely sure how we've gotten to this point… like-...how? Who let this happen? Who could have let this happen? I'm out for a smoke, and I come back, and see Stephen Colbert as a member of the Gorillaz live band. See, I was right after all these years. They simply are not allowed- no, they're not privileged to do this by themselves anymore. I hereby forbid it from happening again. The foot is down.

May 2nd 2017 *Gorillaz appear on French TV*

Murdoc: This one actually wasn't a live performance or anything like that, they wanted to interview me, 2D, Damon and Jamie, for this show on French TV.

Once more, Murdoc was tasked with duties for the weather forecast, this time accompanied by his apprentice 2D.

Murdoc: Here's the weather forecast for the whole…of France.

2D: We have a north easterly breeze coming in from…

Murdoc: The northeast.

2D: The northeast, and they will go down to Dordogne!

Murdoc: DORDOGNE!

2D: Dordogne! Dordogne! Dordogne!

Murdoc: Mercredi…

2D: Comme ci comme ça.

Murdoc: On the Côte d'Azur, Saint-Tropez, Nice..

2D: Biarritz!

Murdoc: Biarritz…and the right wing of France, the eastern side I mean…that's all going to…well that's all going to hell in a handcart…

May 4th 2017 *Gorillaz appear on The Graham Norton Show*

Murdoc: Thank god they actually let us play this one…well not really, we were behind the screen so we actually couldn't go out and see Graham himself…I mean I don't really mind, he's not all that.

Noodle: I drew a little tattoo of myself on Jenny's arm before the show, wanted to test out my drawing skills a bit.

Murdoc: You're such a narcissist sometimes…

Noodle: That is the most hypocritical thing I have ever heard you say.

Noodle sits back in her chair and rolls her eyes. Still fed up with the usual Murdoc Niccals act.

2D: Was that Noel Gallagher on stage with us?

Murdoc: Yeah. Is he still-...look there he is! Blink and he's gone! He's like a rare bird…

Murdoc points over to Noel Gallagaher who is off to the far side of the room for some reason.

Murdoc: You're doing something on the tour aren't you?

Noel nods and says something, but nobody can make out what he is saying.

Murdoc: Huh? Could you speak up? Perhaps come over and sit with us? Why are you all the way over there? Come now.

Russel: On this live show, and subsequent live performances, we used these special bells for We Got The Power, we got these three special bells that cost about 8,000 pounds each. We never used them on the studio version. They are very beautiful bells though.

Murdoc: Couldn't agree more Russ, we actually used those same bells on the Melancholy Hill track. I forgot why they were so valuable…I think they were lined with Prince Charles foreskin or something.

Kevin Bacon: Er…can I ask a question?

Murdoc: Yes you can fire away mate.

2D: Huh? When did Kevin Bacon get here?

Kevin Bacon: Is the price the same for the note or does it go up as the note the goes up in scale.

Murdoc: Well actually it goes up the lower. So really high notes are really cheap.

Kevin Bacon: I knew there was an answer to that.

2D: Er… Ok… Thanks for your time then Mr. Bacon…

Gorillaz x E.ON, a Solar Collaboration

Solar energy was about to get really loud…

May 26th 2017 *E.ON announce their partnership with Gorillaz*

Murdoc: OH! This one, yeah. I liked this one. You know Jaguar was Noodle's thing, Russel had SONOS, so E.ON was my time to shine.

VOL. 1 - WE GOT THE POWER

The collaboration between the band and E.ON was to kick off with a film and music studio powered solely by solar energy and battery storage. E.ON developed and put the studio into operation over the past few months. And as of May 26th, the partners will present a jointly produced video for the track 'We Got The Power'. The film was produced exclusively with solar energy and battery storage.

Russel: We set in the desert, the film features over a thousand dancing toys, hundreds of light installations, giant tanks of illuminating squid, a squadron of flashing UFOs and a giant golden lucky cat. Instead of animation like our usual videos, it uses real, functional props, all powered entirely by solar energy-charged battery storage technology. This really is the future, you dig?

2D: Yeah, yeah. I dig.

Murdoc: I wanted a line of Jamie Hewlett designed vibrators along with it just to give the whole thing an extra level of BZZZZZZ! But E.ON told me to stuff it, so now I've just got crates of the things lying around. Might give em out at our next gig, see what happens.

Noodle: The film sets the stage for the presentation of the solar and battery-powered 'E.ON Kong Solar Studios', which will be premiering at our 'Demon Dayz' Festival in Margate. With the help of solar and battery technology from E.ON, the studio enables aspiring music artists to co-create new tracks with us. The Solar Studio will travel with the us to selected concerts and festivals as part of the Humanz world tour.

Murdoc: I'm an environmentalist myself. That's why the Gorillaz teamed up with E.ON – the lead brainiacs in the field of solar energy storage – to build a brand new studio that not only helps us make better music, but also helps preserve the planet. E.ON also has some outstanding batteries, so we can keep on working even in the dark. YEAH!

The partnership with Gorillaz is part of E.ON's new global brand positioning aimed at working toward a better future by providing innovative customer solutions.

Karsten Wildberger: We are using the sun's energy for this up to now uniquely creative and ambitious project. Our partnership with the Gorillaz shows what can be accomplished with solar energy and battery technologies without compromising performance. Energy offers new opportunities. It's a perfect fit for the Gorillaz, who have inspired their audiences and other artists again and again with their daring sound, visuals as well as innovative performance.

Murdoc: Sorry, who let a board member of E.ON in MY BOOK?

As if pulling together the incredible 'We Got The Power' promo wasn't enough, Gorillaz rebuilt their old HQ, Kong Studios, on-site for a brand new EP - and this time, it was eco-friendly.

On July 25th 2008 The original Kong Studios was burnt to the ground by Murdoc Niccals.
In 2017 ENGINE were asked to bring it back to life to make sun powered music…this unique studio will form new collaborations from renewable energy. It's a sun harvester by day and a music maker by night.

Russel: Sounds pretty neat.

Murdoc: I'm sure you've all heard of the legendary Kong Studios (If not, what are you doing here? Turn to page 10!). So anyway I thought it was high time it rose again from the ashes. Thing is these days, I'm not just a feminist, I'm an environmentalist too, yeah, that's why Gorillaz linked up with E.ON you see, leading eggheads in solar storage to create a spanking new studio that not only lets us create more mind-blowing music, it saves the planet. Anyway, to show what the big yellow thing in the sky can do we made this supercharged film, you're gonna love it. Get it into your eyeballs. WE GOT THE POWAH!

VOL. 2 - A SOLAR COLLABORATION

The second half of the collaboration was an EP produced solely within Kong Solar Studios as part of Gorillaz' Demon Dayz festival in Margate. The record consists of various artists, such as; Lao Ra, Lully, Throwing Shade, RIP Swirl, Mazeone, Kram Berev, Kapitany Mate, and Ress - who all came together to collaborate using nothing but solar energy harvested during the day.

Murdoc: Some have said 'wouldn't it just be easier to hire a load of petrol generators and be done with it?' Well, that's what simpletons would do. But not Gorillaz. We always think one step ahead. When others zig, we zag. When others zag, we zag again, so you never know what we're going to do. We like to keep people on their toes.

Unusually, this was the first Gorillaz record which didn't actually feature…well, Gorillaz. We asked some of these Solar artists to share their experience working on the tracks.

DAY 1

Throwing Shade: How do we start the track? For me I normally just work out some good chords or a little riff.

Lully: You have to kinda provoke yourself by doing something, whatever that might be, by making a noise.

Lao Ra: I think that's like me, the way I do it when the producer starts to play around with chords and stuff I just kind of get a vibe and from there I start to write lyrics straight away while they're doing that and then somehow a little comes together in a very weird way but it always does.

Throwing Shade: I guess I have to remember the fact that this whole studio is solar powered, so it obviously must've stored a lot of energy if we're gonna be working through the night. It's gonna be exciting tonight to just put us all together in this little tiny trailer and see what happens.

Lully: Yeah, trip over each other. In a dynamic way.

Throwing Shade: I feel like there's something else behind it, like some weird social experiment like big brother but a recording studio edition.

Lully: How clear of an idea do you have because I quite often find that I think I have a very clear idea like whether it's a melody or something Ivory.

Lao Ra: And then when you put it down it doesn't sound like that?

Lully: Yeah it's like that, it doesn't sound good but it doesn't matter because it's the motivation to begin and then you find that you can plough on for ages then it just actually keeps getting worse but then it's like 'oh' like a little loop, or whatever, a tiny little trinket of something that ends up forming a new thing.

DAY 2

Lully: It's six a.m. I've just emerged from Kong Studios and we've just finished a track in there, feeling quite frazzled but satisfied. Gord sang quite quickly and Lara's top line came quite naturally. She wrote some lyrics. A nice touch was finding that megaphone hanging outside. I think it's an upbeat track, so you know, I think it's got a fairly nice inclusive appeal to it. It could be a banging success.

Lao Ra: We just finished our first session at Kong studios. It was a very productive evening. We're very tired. I'm ready for bed but I think everyone's really happy with the results. I ate too many sweets and I have a tummy pain now. I mean the caravan is great, it's really cosy. Actually the truck uses a lot of like metaphors with energy and love. I don't know if the whole solar powered studio thing kind of inspired that in me. Once you work with someone you like you don't want to kind of lose that. We all get along pretty well on a personal level but also musically, it was pretty cool.

A Solar Collaboration was uploaded via E.ON's SoundCloud account, with the following tracks;

June 30th 2017 *Frequency (No Dormir)*
December 12th 2017 *Meadows*
December 13th 2017 *Szel*

The record was released physically in March of 2018 as orange translucent vinyl pressings, limited to only 150 copies that were mostly given to competition winners in countries where the EP was recorded.

Russel: Don't tell Muds I ever said this, but if anything were to happen to us four? I think the best option to keep the spirit of Gorillaz alive would be to do something like this on a monthly basis. Get select artists chosen at random to work together for a night and produce a fire track. That's what Gorillaz is really all about, pushing artists to do the unthinkable. I hope that we can continue to have that, long after our singer, our stylist, me. It's a nice dream I suppose, to have your music live forever.

Sleeping Powder by 2D

After a few months had passed from the release of Humanz, one of the main criticisms of the album the ensemble had picked up on was the distinct lack of vocals provided by Gorillaz frontman, 2D. It appeared that said criticism had gone straight to the vacant pretty boy's tiny head, and in response he began plotting to release a single on his own accord, detached from the politically driven direction Russel had drilled into him and their various collaborators. Good grief.

2D: At first, I didn't realise anyone would miss me, mainly because of all the stuff Murdoc used to say to me. But in the end, when the record was out, I felt sort of underrepresented on it. Nobody was stopping me from being on it like, but maybe I was a bit too generous…so I thought I'd do a song by myself and a video with just me in, there was no need to tell the others really, was there? So I kept it a secret, but I don't feel bad, I don't care what the others think. I was just giving the fans what they really wanted, me.

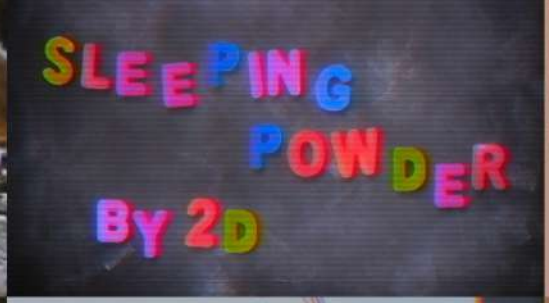
June 2nd 2017 *Murdoc is comatosed after overindulging during an afterparty*

2D: (grinning) Hmm…that was brilliant, for me, not for the others. While everyone was worrying if he was gonna make it to the hospital in time, I was already plotting how I could make the most of the time I was given.

June 5th 2017 *2D records Sleeping Powder*

The day after Gorillaz warm up show at the Portsmouth Guildhall, 2D returned to the Spirit House to compose a track in his own image.

2D: So this song started off pretty basic, I was just chipping away at this rhythm I had with my acoustic guitar, was something like 'E Am D GMaj7' and I was just repeating that over and over, then I started slowly getting faster and faster, but nothing was really working for me. I was hungover from the night before and was in this sorta state of trance, but I knew this would probably be one of my only chances to do something I wanted to do. I was just about ready to give up when I noticed these pills on the table next to all of Murdoc's magazines…I hadn't touched them in probably like, fourteen, maybe fifteen years. Figured 'why not, might help' so I cracked the lid and dropped a few, then pulled out my Wurlitzer and started playing along with the chords I'd come up with earlier. I began doing some guide vocals just to get things started. 'Gone with the self of the day.' It didn't mean anything, just sorta summed up how I was feeling in that instance, but then my voice started going all distant and faint-like, I think they'd hit me, I was back. Suddenly everything started sounding great to me, It was a total rush! Just like that the song became a real-time experience of how I was riding that high in the moment, I took my pills and I got in the mood (snorts). I picked up one of Murodc's bass guitars and just started going mental, jumping up and down, the amp was boomin' but it sounded so sick and high to me, I was killing it. When I came down I compiled all that I'd recorded and sent it off to our live band to learn at rehearsals, the others had no idea because they were too busy waiting on Murdoc, I'd pulled it off!


SLEEPING
POWDER
BY 2D

VERHOEVEN
MAD
HelmutRash

AD
HelmutRash
JVM
Arseall
THE CROQUET PLAYER.
GIANT
move on up to dragon snaps tale.
Bring me your love.
KUBLA KHAN
Gershwin
BRAHMS
HANDEL
SCHUMANN
BERNSTEIN
BARTOK

June 7th 2017 *2D records Sleeping Powder's music video*

The video begins with a sample from a 1987 anti-drug PSA entitled 'This is Your Brain on Drugs.' After a glitch in the footage, we cut to plastic fridge magnets spelling out 'Sleeping Powder By 2D.' We then see 2D mimic playing Murdoc's grand piano, surrounded by various odds and ends he'd found around the Spirit House. The camera then pans out to show a taxidermied Cortez the Raven sitting at the top of the piano only to then fly off screen. As 2D begins to sing the world around him seemingly dissolves, appearing to be paralysed he's shown floating in his stool high above a distorted ocean. After slowly falling asleep in his seat, 2D jolts up looking directly at the camera saying 'I'm back!' The next shots depict 2D in front of surreal stock footage with a psychedelic filter while improvising a dance. Some of the backgrounds include; a rotating arcade machine, a mostly empty road, a circus performance, and Notting Hill's Trellick Tower. In the final quarter of the video, 2D is seen sitting on a man with a rubber chicken's head, only to then fade into the black background. When the music comes back into full swing, 2D is dancing once more, towering above thousands of female fan dancers with a purple and red mountain backdrop as the sun begins to set. We then quickly cut to multiple shots of him dancing among fireworks. As the music calms, 2D returns to the grand piano, only this time inverted, as if his perspective had changed from the journey he'd just experienced.

2D: I didn't do this with Jamie Hewlett, or any director for that matter. I just set up a greenscreen in Murdoc's bedroom, just behind the grand piano. It was all totally improvised, I used Noodle's Dare for inspiration for my dance, only I think mine turned out way cooler.

June 8th 2017 *Gorillaz premiere Sleeping Powder live*

With Murdoc's absence from the group, 2D successfully implanted Sleeping Powder into their Brixton Academy's setlist, having collaborator Damon Albarn explain the premise of the track on 2D's behalf while he briefed Noodle and Russel on the situation backstage.

2D: Without Murdoc there to muck up my vocal parts at our live shows I was able to actually perform this piece alongside Damon as a kind of duet, with him taking the chorus and me doing the more abstract rappy parts. Russel and Noodle were really confused as to how I'd pulled this off, but they both liked it, which is good but honestly I wouldn't have cared either way. When Murdoc finally woke up and found out he didn't actually care too much, I think he's gotten into S&M to derive pleasure from the things we do that he doesn't like, as sort of some kind of buffer so we don't leave him again. He's a freak, but don't tell anyone I said that, the other two think I should be nice to him since he's making an effort, I play along but one of these days I'm going to get back at that rotten ligger, and this was my first step to doing so.

When confronted about his newly found weekend hobby, Murdoc responded:

Murdoc: Ah…Madame Flesch, my dominatrix. Couldn't escape her shackles if I tried. She's got some pretty hardcore gear, lot of vintage Cold War stuff. I actually spent a month in an isolation tank she got from the KGB. Absolutely harrowing.

June 16th 2017 *Sleeping Powder single is released via streaming services*

Sleeping Powder was performed by 2D, including vocals, synthesiser, bass guitar, and drums. Drum programming by Remi Kabaka Jr. and mastered by John Davis. Additional mixing by Stephen Sedgwick. The video was edited by Seb Monk, with additional motion design and VFX by Aislinn Clifford.

Demon Dayz 2017

March 6th 2017 *Demon Dayz Festival is announced*

Before they had made their sensational media comeback, within the shadows, Gorillaz announced their very own music festival, named and themed around the band's history to date, to be performed at Dreamland Amusement Park in Margate.

Murdoc: Now that's when you know you've really made it. Your own music festival. A lot of artists don't even get that privilege, yet us, Gorillaz, are able to have our very own Coachella, Glastonbury, and Woodstock all rolled into one. You should be expecting us to talk about our entry in the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame in the next book.

Russel: Life is like a merry-go-round, controlled by the man. But for one night only, we are in control. Demons in dreamland, baby. It's a funkstation stargate to a brave new world. Shit's gonna blow your minds. So head to the sea and enter a new kind of utopia, a society of equals, everybody on the same page of the book we call living. Gorillaz, humans, one and all, singing truth to power.

Murdoc: I've always had a soft spot for the English seaside. Grey skies, biting winds, tramps living free on sea air and super-strength lager. Edge of the world, isn't it? Far away from the banal conformity of urban England. So it seemed an appropriate spot to launch a sonic nuke of hope, truth and despair.

2D: Well for me personally, I'm looking forward to the fairgrounds there cos I like fairgrounds. I used to work on dodgems in Eastbourne, so they've got good dodgems in Margate.

Murdoc: You never told me that. You've told me everything.

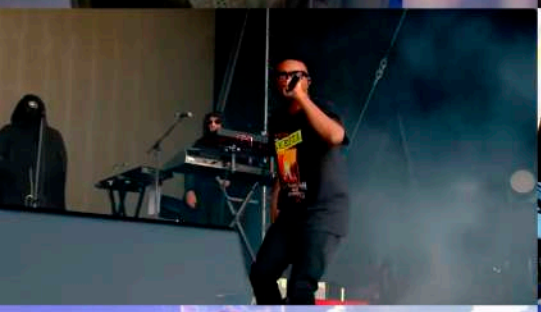
Preceding the big festival, Gorillaz performed a few warm up gigs around the United Kingdom in preparation for this big event.

June 2nd 2017 *Alban Arena, St Albans, United Kingdom*

Murdoc: At this gig, we premiered an unreleased track, Garage Palace featuring Little Simz for the first time ever, the proper studio single would not release til much later. But still…consider it a monumental event in history.

June 4th 2017 *Portsmouth Guildhall, Portsmouth, United Kingdom*

Russel: Damon took the liberty of dedicating 'Andromeda' that night to those lost or injured from the London Bridge terrorist attack the previous day. I don't know man, the atmosphere that night, this whole leg actually, was just unsettling. This wasn't the first attack either. This was following two attacks which took place in March and May respectively, the latter of which at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester.



Russel: There was a time where our country's terror threat level was raised to critical. Honestly, I was surprised I mustered up the courage to go out there and play, since I was just so on edge, worrying that something could happen to us or the audience at any given moment.

June 8th 2017 *Brixton Academy, London, United Kingdom*

2D: This is the gig where I premiered 'Sleeping Powder', but you already know this. Unless you skipped around, in which case you are either very impatient or just not good at reading books.

Murdoc: We had some very special guests at this gig, Shaun Ryder, Vince Staples, and Popcaan. We hadn't performed DARE live with Shaun since Glastonbury, and this was the first time we did Ascension and Saturnz Barz with Vince Staples and Popcaan respectively. So an amazing closure to this little warm up tour, but we've had the appetisers, now it's time for the main course meal.

June 10th 2017 *Demon Dayz festival is held at the Dreamland Amusement Park, Margate, United Kingdom*

2D: Did you know, Margate was named by the Romans cos when they came to Margate he said…

2D turns to look at Murdoc.

2D: Y'know about this?

Murdoc: OH! I DO KNOW ABOUT THIS! The Roman emperor Cabalius

2D: *Cabalius.*

Murdoc: Cabalius-

2D: The fifteenth

Murdoc: Cabalius the fifteenth

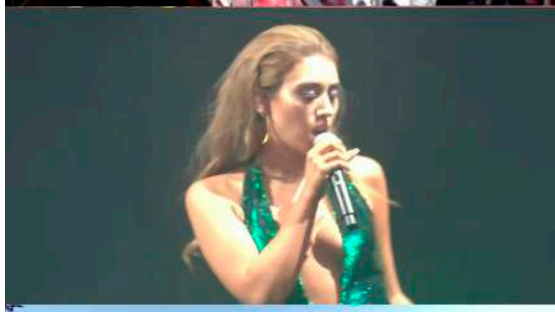
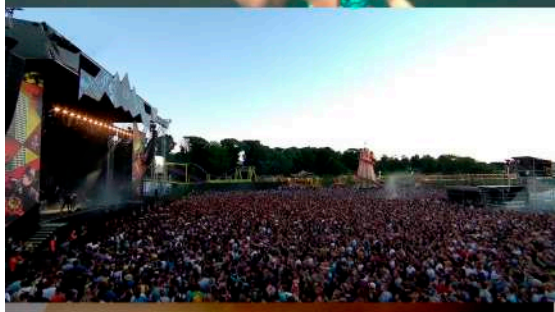
2D: He said, that's my gate, not your gate.

Murdoc: And so they named it.

2D: Margate. Margatius.

Murdoc: Yeah…

Finally, the day had come for Gorillaz and music fans from around the globe. The Demon Dayz Festival.

With an earth throttling line up preceding the main event, performances from Kilo Kish, Fufanu, The Shapeshifters, Popcaan, De La Soul, Kali Uchis, Remi Kabaka & Chris P Cuts, Vince Staples, Little Simz, Claptone, Kano, and Danny Brown. All before Gorillaz would take the main stage. Alongside the music itself, attendees were also allowed to go on all of the rides around the park.

Russel: While we were backstage rehearsing and doing soundchecks, 2D was off going on all the rides and eating candy floss.

2D: I was having so much fun! Met up with a load of fans, took a ton of pictures. Went on all these rides, ate some popcorn! It was great! That's how you pregame a festival gig.

Noodle: Would've been more useful if you were rehearsing with us…

Murdoc: Good things don't come cheap though, at least not with my refined pallet. To pull something of this calibre off you need to cut a few corners wherever possible, you know? Speed up a few health and safety checks, water down the kegs, hire busted portaloos, sacrifice a sliver of your political beliefs for a brand deal. That's right boys and girls, Gorillaz are shaking things up with a cool, refreshing can of Red Bull. Slip it into your Mums Irish coffee, why don't you? Just have your ID ready at the counter. And…er…tell 'em to keep their Breitbart-esk ideology away from the kids, yeah?

2D: Keep it left.

Murdoc: Ah yes, the good people of Red Bull, here to help promote the festival. They would stream the show on their little TV network, as well as their YouTube channel. To help spread good morale, they put us, Gorillaz, on Red Bull cans for a limited time to promote the festival. I actually think I had a few cans before the show to help get me in the mood…imagine. Me, drinking out of a Red Bull can, with my face on it, at a festival that is being sponsored by Red Bull, that I organised. Surely some executive is getting off to this somewhere.

Russel: Cut the crap Muds, it paid the bills.

Murdoc: Come to think of it, our E.O.N solar studio was there at that festival too. Handouts for everyone I suppose.

When it came time for the live show, fans were left a little confused, when low and behold, a cult of hooded figures went up on stage in place of the usual Gorillaz live band. These masked entities were seen all throughout the day at the festival, but now we finally knew a little more about them. Were they associated with the Gorillaz live band in any way? While the group was heading up on stage, another unreleased Gorillaz tune was played on the loudspeakers titled 'Phoenix On The Hill', this led to them all harmoniously ringing little bells, the group was later revealed to be known as the Cult Of Humanz. Upon arrival at the stage, the Cult stripped off their robes, revealing the Gorillaz live band.

Murdoc: Well, we couldn't keep having everyone confuse the live band for us now, could we? Figured we'd give them a little gimmick, another brand deal with the folks over at Chester Perry. That should keep everyone's pockets well lined for all the overpriced stale beers they're flogging here. Man, what a storm we played that night, definitely going down as one of the best live concerts in history…no doubt about it…the only dud the whole night was poor Peven swallowing a beetle and feeling a little sick, we had to delay 'Strobelite' to a bit further down the setlist. We still played it though! And he fought through the puke and diarrhoea to still do a killer vocal performance.

The Guardian, June 11th, "The band's Demon Dayz festival features a carousel of guests playing sets. De La Soul, consummate professionals in warming up a crowd, spend 95% of their performance testing how loud the crowd can shout "ho" before finishing with Me, Myself and I. Kano is also on crowd-pleasing form – and on brand for the seaside, with 's lines about "ice cream vans, Screwballs, 99 Flake. This all leaves the stage set for Gorillaz. The sonically scattered nature of Humanz, which sounds as if you're flicking through a playlist, works to Albarn's advantage tonight. He has his very own jukebox, and over 27 songs they play hits, album tracks and unreleased songs.It begins theatrically – 30-odd figures cloaked in black form a procession as they climb to the stage. The masks are dropped to reveal a smiling Albarn in fine fettle – he hugs his guests and holds that arms-aloft pose he's perfected. As guests come and go, it is easy to think of Gorillaz as less a band and more a carnival of collaborators, with Albarn the musical polymath holding it all together."

Russel: This was a huge success for us, everything about this festival was well received from fans and critics alike. It kinda made us ponder on this idea…maybe it wouldn't hurt to try doing this again sometime…

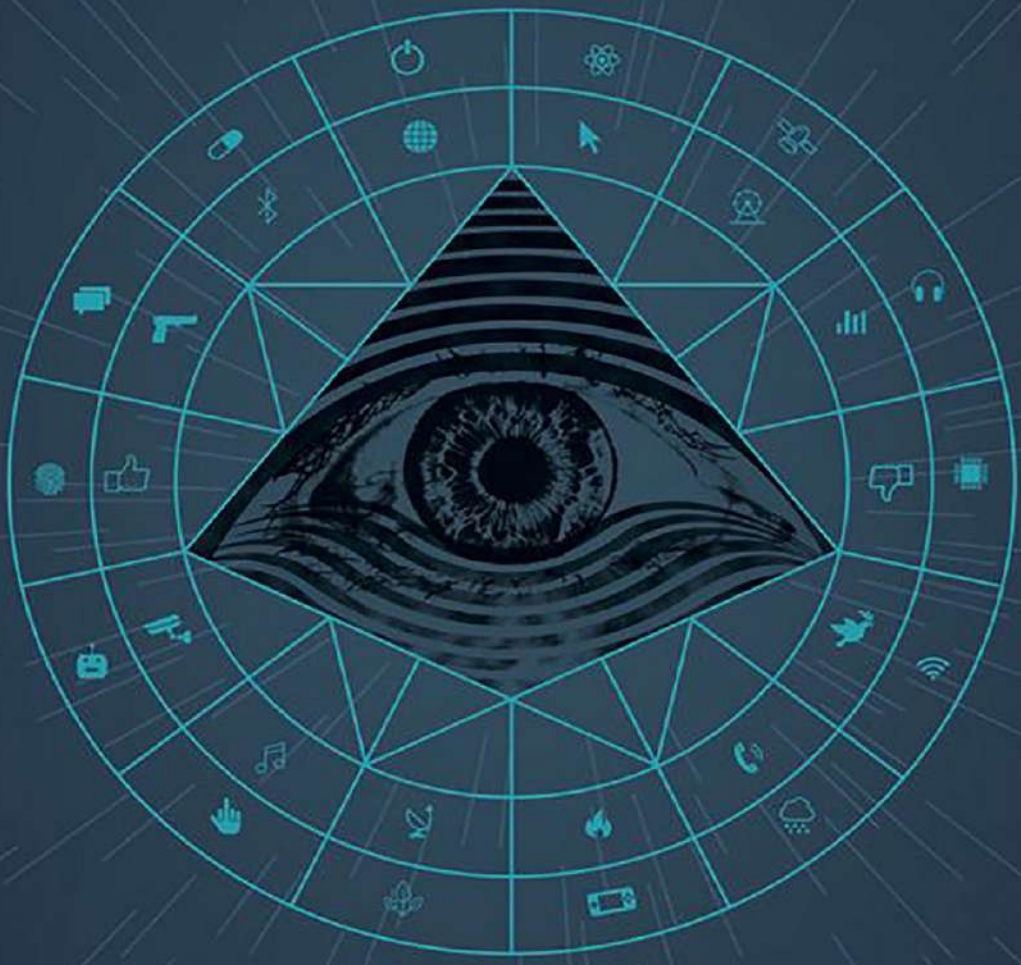
2D: It's a shame that Cyborg never turned up.

Murdoc: Oh yeah, what happened with that?

2D: She was supposed to come play with us, last I heard she was staying in Lincolnshire, learning how to ride a bike. She's got her own thing going on now, apparently.

LIVE ON Red Bull TV

DEMON DAYZ FESTIVAL



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Murdoc: Never found out how she managed to reactivate herself, I'd ask but…well, you and me both know I wouldn't listen.

2D: She can't talk either.

Murdoc: That too.

Independent, June 14th, "After a six-year hiatus, Gorillaz's cartoon universe set its sights on the sleepy seaside town of Margate with a one-day festival named after the band's second studio album, Demon Dayz. But as the sun blazes down on a 15,000 strong crowd, one begins to wonder why co-creators Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett decided to skip down to the isle of Thanet to host their event. Hampered by a reputation that haunts many British coastal towns, Margate is well known for its dilapidated seaside charm and, controversially, as an area forcibly hounded by UKIP's Nigel Farage back in 2015. Inevitably, it seems that rather than the town's burgeoning coastal art scene, stunning seafront or Carry On-style cockles 'n' muscles, it was politics that brought the two together. Envisioned as a party album for a world gone mad, Humanz made a worthy addition to Gorillaz's politically charged collection of hit records and just three days after an election result that shocked the country, the band's message had never felt more fitting. "It's been a weird week in this country," Albarn said. "A real surprise and then an inevitable bullshit outcome. But this is only the beginning cos there's some of you out there who weren't able to vote this time, but next time you'll be able to vote," he continued. "It's going to grow." An optimistic, buoyant atmosphere that felt palpable at all times, Albarn delivered a star-studded spectacle packed with stellar performances from the likes of De La Soul, Kelela, Vince Staples, Danny Brown and Kano. But it was a warm-up performance by London-born Little Simz that really shone through. A rapper who has been compared to iconoclasts like Lauryn Hill and praised by Kendrick Lamar; the 23-year-old artist commanded the stage as she shifted seamlessly between singing, spitting and jamming on the guitar. Returning to join Gorillaz on the stage for an exclusive performance, Little Simz was just one of many guests to come and go throughout the night with Shaun Ryder roaring along to Dare, while De La Soul's Maseo let out his notoriously fanatical laugh for Feel Good Inc. While politics predictably loomed over the show, Demon Dayz festival demonstrated Albarn's ability to get the very best out of his collaborators and to create a sound that still sounds just as fresh and inventive as it did some 16 years ago.

Murdoc: We should really stop giving Albarn a platform to spew his half baked political views.

2D: You don't agree with him?

Murdoc: Oh no, I do. I just don't like him.

Noodle: Our crowd wasn't exactly welcoming to our up and coming collaborator Little Simz. A few were booing her, insisting that Gorillaz played in her place. To those people I'd like to say, if you're at our festival, going to our collaborators performances demanding that they get off stage in place of us, then you really don't understand what we're really about. That attitude, that dismissal, we don't condone that. In maybe three years time, you'll be seeing her face on billboards. I promise you that, and when that happens you're going to feel incredibly stupid.

Fringe Frequency, June 16th, Gorillaz two-hour headline performance was the biggest highlight that sweltering Saturday. The group's first proper album in seven years, Humanz, didn't leave us with the same sense of all-out wonderment that their previous albums have. So, naturally, we were curious to see what the live environment, and an audience of devotees, would do for the band and its songs. They started theatrically before they'd even taken the stage. Band leader Damon Albarn and the rest of Gorillaz' live band emerged, dressed in all black, with face masks and pointed hoods, on the far right-hand side of the crowd. In unison, they thrust their arms into the sky, ringing a bell they each carried, and steadily snaked their way through the parting crowd to the main stage. This was an international coming home party for Gorillaz. When Albarn finally unmasked himself and welcomed the crowd, he was greeted was joyous adoration. Surrounded by the very people who love their songs most, the music took on a far greater power than it would have at a larger festival, such as Glastonbury or Latitude. Hits such as 'DARE', 'Feel Good Inc', 'Dirty Harry' and 'Stylo' (tribute to Bobby Womack) were played with gusto from the band, as the audience – many of whom were seeing Gorillaz for the first time – sang along loudly. Honestly, having seen Gorillaz ourselves in 2010, we weren't sure if the energy would compare. Joining fans keenly chorusing the words to 'El Manaña' and 'Kids with Guns', well… we got chills. Songs from Humanz commanded much of the two-hour set, and guests including Vince Staples, De La Soul, Danny Brown, Pusha T, Kelela, and more, all stepped in to play their part. Early favourites, 'Saturnz Barz', with Popcaan, and 'She's My Collar', with Kali Uchis in a sparkling green catsuit, were a joy. Meanwhile, dance songs 'Charger', which features the voice of Grace Jones, and 'Strobelite', with Peven Everett, unleashed the carefree raver lifestyle that many of us wish we could live week in, week out.

Others songs, such as 'Sex Murder Party' and 'We Got the Power', took on a whole new life. On the former, aided by Albarn's frenzied keyboard jabs, guest vocalists Jamie Principle and Zebra Katz scream the song's eponymous hook with wild pleasure. While on the latter, the band was joined by Blur's Graham Coxon on guitar and The Savages' Jehnny Beth on vocals, who was held aloft by the crowd like a saviour, as the 21st century speedway music rocketed to its crescendo. By far the biggest surprise was the back-to-back performance of 'Out of Body', with singer Kilo Kish, and as-yet-unreleased Gorillaz song, 'Garage Palace', with rapper Little Simz. Hearing and seeing Kilo Kish perform vocal cartwheels with her cherry-fresh voice, over a space-age dance loop, was incredible – topped off by one of Gorillaz' backing singer's filling in for Imani Vonsha with a humongous cry of gospel passion during its outro. Next, was 'Garage Palace', and in the words of The Pharcyde: "Oh, sh*t!". We'd seen Little Simz earlier in the day, and rappers twice her age would hesitate when faced with the irregular, runaway beat of 'Garage Palace'. Not Simz. The instant the synthetic ketones began, she was off, flawlessly weaving her words over and under the beat like an Olympian through an obstacle course. "Can it be that this is our time?" Simz raps during the song. This was her time and it was undoubtedly a moment that will long be remembered by those who witnessed it. Gorillaz is a massive production, and nothing puts that into focus like their colossal live performances. Combining urgent-sounding dance music and all-out pop, melancholic blues and frantic hip hop, Gorillaz are a band that defies categorisation. They're performance, and the festival in general, was a roaring success. "Two words for you," said Albarn during the band's final song, 'Demon Days'. "The first is unity. And through unity we find love." The band gave its plethora of multicultural supporters both that evening. In these times of stark division that counts a whole lot.

Murdoc: Did I hear Glastonbury? We've already surpassed the greats it seems, too bad we can't do this every year. It's probably for the best, I got a bit too much sun in Margate. Probably shouldn't have worn a mankini, I was out of action for a while after that.

Russel: So were my eyes.

2D: I had fun, was better than yesterday. But it's tomorrow I'm really worried about. It was nice of Damon to join me on stage again. Although his dancing needs a bit of work.

And what was the best takeaway from the whole experience?

2D: Tinnitus. I've got tinnitus from Demon Dayz. Sorry, what was the question? I can't hear you.

The Devil's Due

May 18th 2017 *Murdoc is nominated for The Music Icon Awards, sponsored by MaxTractor*

Hot off the heels of their fifth studio album, Gorillaz were announced for one of the most prestigious music awards that can be bestowed upon an artist within the industry, a 'Music Icon' award.

Murdoc: So prestigious that it's not even a public ceremony, purely for the one percent. Imagine the Billboard Icon Awards only not shit. And with a sponsorship like MaxTractor you can't go wrong.

2D: Er…who's MaxTractor?

Murdoc: You've never heard of THE MAXTRACTOR??? I'm not too surprised actually, they were this great makeup brand which was disingenuously shut down by a health and safety watchdog, backroom deals had it out for them I suppose.

June 12th 2017 *Gorillaz attend The Music Icon Awards, sponsored by MaxTractor*

Murdoc: To my great embarrassment, the main gong of the night, Music Icon, is going to be me which obviously I'd tried to turn down, but everyone begged me to accept it. So I'm sat at my dresser, trowelling on some plutonium green foundation (courtesy of MaxTractor) when suddenly, next to me in the mirror, I see this freaky red face, all cracked and sneering.

2D: You sure it just wasn't your escort?

Murdoc: He runs a forked tongue across these dreadfully dry lips, and I'm about to offer him some lip balm when there's this massive thunderclap…and he's gone.

2D: Bet that's not the only bit of clap he gave you, am I right Murdoc?

Murdoc: Shut it twirp or you'll be singing Celine Dion all the way 'till christmas time!!!

…

Murdoc: Are we better now? Where was I… When you've lived the kind of life I have, you get a lot of flashbacks. So I dismiss it, and hop into the limo with the others and head for the award show.

Fast forward through a few soul-sucking hours of other people getting awards, right to the end of the night, the spot saved for the top trophy. Music Icon. 2D takes to the stage.

2D: He gave me this speech to do as his intro, wanted me to say some very touching things about him, well I did alright, but not touchy in the way you're thinking of, I told em that Murdoc likes them sixteen on-

Murdoc: Let's not repeat what you said here ol' chum, ey?

2D bungles on Murdoc as the winner of The Music Icon award reluctantly…sponsored by MaxTractor…do I really have to say that every time?

Murdoc: If you don't you're done, you get that?

Right… The lights go down as Mozart's Requiem blasts over the PA. A crash can be heard, presumably 2D Falling off the stage in the darkness, Murdoc presses on regardless.

Murdoc: Cue some dazzling pyrotechnics choreographed by my friends at Cirque du Soleil, then I come soaring over the crowd from the rear wearing a jetpack, cigarette in mouth, sipping a Tom Collins. Lot of gasps, may have set fire to someone's wig, but all in
all. A textbook entrance.

Russel: Every time…

Murdoc: I land on stage, then unfold the speech I'd had written for me by some top Hollywood scribes. As my eyes scan the speech, I realise to my horror that the writers have totally misread my brief. They've painted me as a solo act, making out the other three as my backing band! And even though that's largely true, I feel a smidge bad saying it on such a big stage. But what choice do I have at this late hour?

Noodle: Improvise?

Murdoc: So I read the script as written-

2D: Dear lord.

Murdoc: Which I can see riles up Noodle and Russ somewhat. (2D still in the orchestra pit, I believe) It's a great speech, though. Some terrific lines. "Niccals is responsible for more hits than the Gambino crime family" is a particular favourite highlight. I milk the applause, grab my award, fire up the jetpack and take off. But due to a technical issue, and also probably because I was fairly slotted at this point, I crashed into the ceiling and got snagged in the rigging. My trousers tear off, exposing my under-crackers. Few minutes of awe-struck silence, camera flashes, then I finally wriggle free. The jetpack backfires, I plummet headfirst into the stage and it all goes dark.

2D: Yeah, serves you right.

Murdoc: No no, see this is the weird part, right? Oddly, there's no impact.

2D: Eh?

Murdoc: I kept falling, deeper and deeper into darkness. It felt like I'd been falling forever, so long in fact that I had time to smoke a second fag on the way down. Finally I landed right into a chair facing a desk in the middle of this demonic ballroom. There are frescos, flame torches, a gentle hubbub of gnashing and wailing. Sat on the other side of the desk, was none other than the Dark Lord himself…

After years of trial and error, it appeared that Beelzebub, the Dark Lord himself, had finally won one over on the sleazy, conning genius that is Murdoc Niccals.

Murdoc: I bested his henchmen, Malthus, the Boogieman, even Noodle took out Maazu! We toppled the entire underworld with a few singles and a crate of rum. But a Hell portal opening right underneath me? Yeah…I think you've got me there pal. He was probably counting down the days until this very moment, given how many times I'd stiffed him over the years; the contracts, the guns, the killing of his associates. You know, I'd never actually met him in person up until this point, it was always his lawyers or a representative like Flatulence. I was whazzed off my lid when I made that pact with him… I tried to feign ignorance, but as the contract slid across the table, with my signature signed in blood. I knew it wasn't looking good, I'd even drawn a smiley face next to it.

2D: So how'd you squeeze your way out of this one? You sell my soul?

Murdoc: No, why?

2D: Feels like it sometimes…

Beelzebub began to lead Murdoc down an especially hellish corridor. Continually banging on about vanity being Murdoc's most fatal flaw.

Murdoc: Better to reign in Hell, than to serve in Heaven.

Murdoc responded haphazardly, quoting a beer mat he read the day before. The pair share a laugh, and then, true to form.

Murdoc: He reaches for the old trapdoor lever, we all saw this coming. What, you expected a song and dance routine? I wasn't having it, kicked him in the nethers and scarpered. Jumped in a lift, hit a button marked 'surface', and off I went to the sound of Satan himself giving it both barrels.

Moments later, Murdoc awakes flat on his back on the Music Icon Awards (sponsored by MaxTractor) stage.

Murdoc: Thought I must've dreamed the whole thing after cracking my noggin.

Murdoc gets up triumphantly, to a standing ovation, then leading the charge to the afterparty back at Gorillaz HQ, Spirit House.

Murdoc: The soiree was packed with A-listers who sadly I can't name for legal reasons, but trust me, big hitters.

Russel: I was slightly on edge the whole night, I could sense something black and murky in the air.

Murdoc: We live in a building literally named the 'Spirit House', I don't know what you were expecting to come from that. There I was, playing host, spinning anecdotes, doing my infamous 'cockdog' shtick, then grimacing politely while other people do theirs.

All was going smoothly until 2D appeared in the centre of a crowded room with his head doing a 360 degree rotation while projectile vomiting.

Murdoc: What's the matter D, can't handle your drink? You're worse than Russ!

He yells from across the room, conjuring a laugh from himself.

Murdoc: That seemed to sort him out.

2D: I'm a bit concerned, I don't remember any of this.

Murdoc: You don't remember lots of things, like, how many fingers was I holding up to you this morning?

2D: One?

Murdoc: It was two, these middle two.

Later on, a small crowd gathered around the grand piano in Murdoc's master bedroom.

Murdoc: Michael Buble was having a jam when suddenly, Noodle, hair ablaze, came at me with a skewer. To be honest I'm glad of the interruption, needed an excuse to peel away anyway. When I clock Noodle again she's back to normal too. On reflection, I see now there were a few red flags, but hindsight is a wonderful thing.

As the night continued unusual occurrences became the norm, with Murdoc's A-listers getting incredibly twitchy.

Murdoc: I tapped my glass and began an impromptu speech to distract the lot. Just as I'm building momentum, there's all this screaming. I turn to see Russel, twice his normal height, which isn't unusual mind you, only this time he's got horns and lava spurting from his nostrils.

The Furniture began flying around the various rooms of the Spirit House, with lightning crackling up the walls.

Murdoc: Suffice to say my speech was ruined.

The chaos caused a mass exodus of guests, leaving only 2D, Noodle, Murdoc, and a now 12-feet-tall Demonic Russel Hobbs. The Demon Russel begins stomping towards Murdoc, his huge muscles rippling with flame, revealing his name to be Thealamosh, the Boogieman's successor. Meanwhile, Noodle's relaxing on her phone on a beanbag chair, not at all invested.

2D: This is every other day for us to be fair.

Murdoc: I explained to Thealamosh that this was just a big mix up, but then he pulled out the contract, and pointed to my signature.

A fiery portal opens as Murdoc's clothes rip, now down to his bare flesh for the second time that night. Chains began flying out from the portal, shackling his wrists and ankles, as they began to drag Murdoc down to Hell. It was time for Murdoc to pay his dues. Murdoc anxiously begins yelling at Noodle for help, she takes a snap of him of the defeated bassist, sending it to a group chat threat.

Murdoc: I think she was still a bit ticked off about my awards speech.

But now he was only a foot from the gateway, his nails dug into the carpet. He yells for help again, with no response from Noodle. 2D does his best, attempts to put out the Hell portal with a fire extinguisher, but it explodes and sends him across the room and out the window.

Murdoc: Top effort though. By this point my legs were through the portal, the demons laughing at me, the Hounds of Hades gnawing on my ankles, Beelzebub's choir screeching my name, an eternal damnation but a moment away. And that's when it hits me. There's a chance that some of this might be my fault. So I shout to Noodle "Okay, okay! I've balls'd up and I need help, por favor! I'm sorry about my speech earlier! I'm not a solo act! Without you lot I'm just a wanker!"

Noodle considers this for a while. Then puts her phone down, picks up the contract. Reads it, a smidge too calmly if we're to be honest considering the predicament at hand. Finally, she eyeballs Thealamosh, and casually informs him:

Noodle: The contract was not valid. It said his soul is owed in exchange for becoming a world famous icon. Two problems. I searched online, Murdoc is the founder of MaxTractor.

Murdoc: Ah, she had me there. One of my little side-projects…

Noodle: Also, that contract's not even written in his blood.

Murdoc: Oh yeah, there's that too. Probably should've mentioned that one earlier, come to think of it. They got me, I created the event myself. She was 100% correct, obviously. There's always the Grammys…

Noodle: His award meant nothing. He's not an icon, he's just an idiot.

With that, Noodle folded the contract into an aeroplane and lobbed it into the flames.

Murdoc: That was it really, a few zingers were thrown in, the demons were sucked out of Russ, into the portal, and wallop! Quite a good night that, all in all.

Russel: When I woke up I had no idea what was going on, my clothes were all shredded, hot embers all over the floor, the carpet charred. Why you keep getting us into this shit man?

Murdoc: You know, I'm beginning to question that myself. Without sounding too up my own arnus, I don't think I ever needed those faustian pacts to become a legend, should've had more faith in myself as a nipper. Probably gonna start shifting some of this black magic voodoo tosh I've got lying around, not all of it though. Works great with the ladies. Right, that was decent, do you think we overdid it a bit? Probably. Let's move on.

Jaguar Continued: The Spirit House Extension

June 19th 2017 *Jaguar Online ARG is announced.*

Nine months after the initial announcement of Noodle becoming the global ambassador for Jaguar Racing, Panasonic was ready to launch the second phase of their collaboration.

Jaguar's Mission HQ, based in the UK, hijacked Murdoc's security feed of Spirit House with a special message from a representative of their company, inviting applicants to solve a code-breaking challenge, With more than 4,000 possible combinations, via the Gorillaz mixed reality app. The prize? To be recruited as one of the next generation's world-class electronics and software engineers.

The footage was uploaded to Jaguar's Youtube channel later that day.

Once the announcement went public, a new area of the Spirit House was made accessible to fans through the Gorillaz mixed reality app, the basement, which held various leftover artefacts from the band's past including the famous 19-2000 Geep, Noodle's old tricycle, a salvaged bumper car from Tusspot's Fairground, and a life-size replica of the M. Harriet ship featured in the On Melancholy Hill music video.

Murdoc: I spent around three months tracking down that Geep. 2D thought it would be a good idea to flog it to some bloke in Germany.

2D: I had to make something back after you torched Kong and our last studio sank. You'd be surprised how little royalties I actually make off Gorillaz.

Murdoc: Well if we truly make such little money, Why the hell did we invest in a ginormous replica ship when we live over six hundred miles away from the ocean?

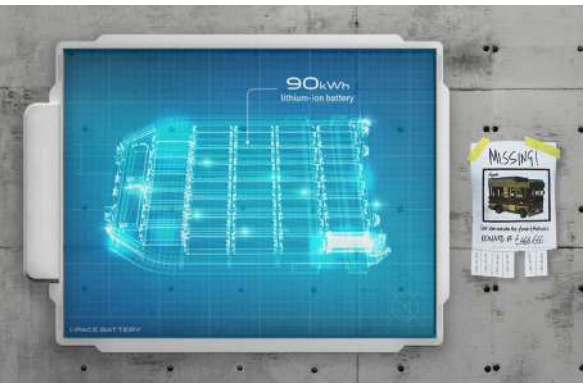
The rest of the band look at each other, each of them simultaneously shrugging.

August 31st 2017 *Daniel Dunkley is announced as the first Jaguar recruit*

After two months, applications from thirty-five countries, over five hundred completions, and fifty interviews with participants, Daniel Dunkley of Gloucester, UK, was revealed to be the first Jaguar Land Rover Recruit via the app. He was quickly invited to Spirit House for a video interview and a photograph with Noodle.

2D: He doesn't look too happy in that photo with you Noodle.

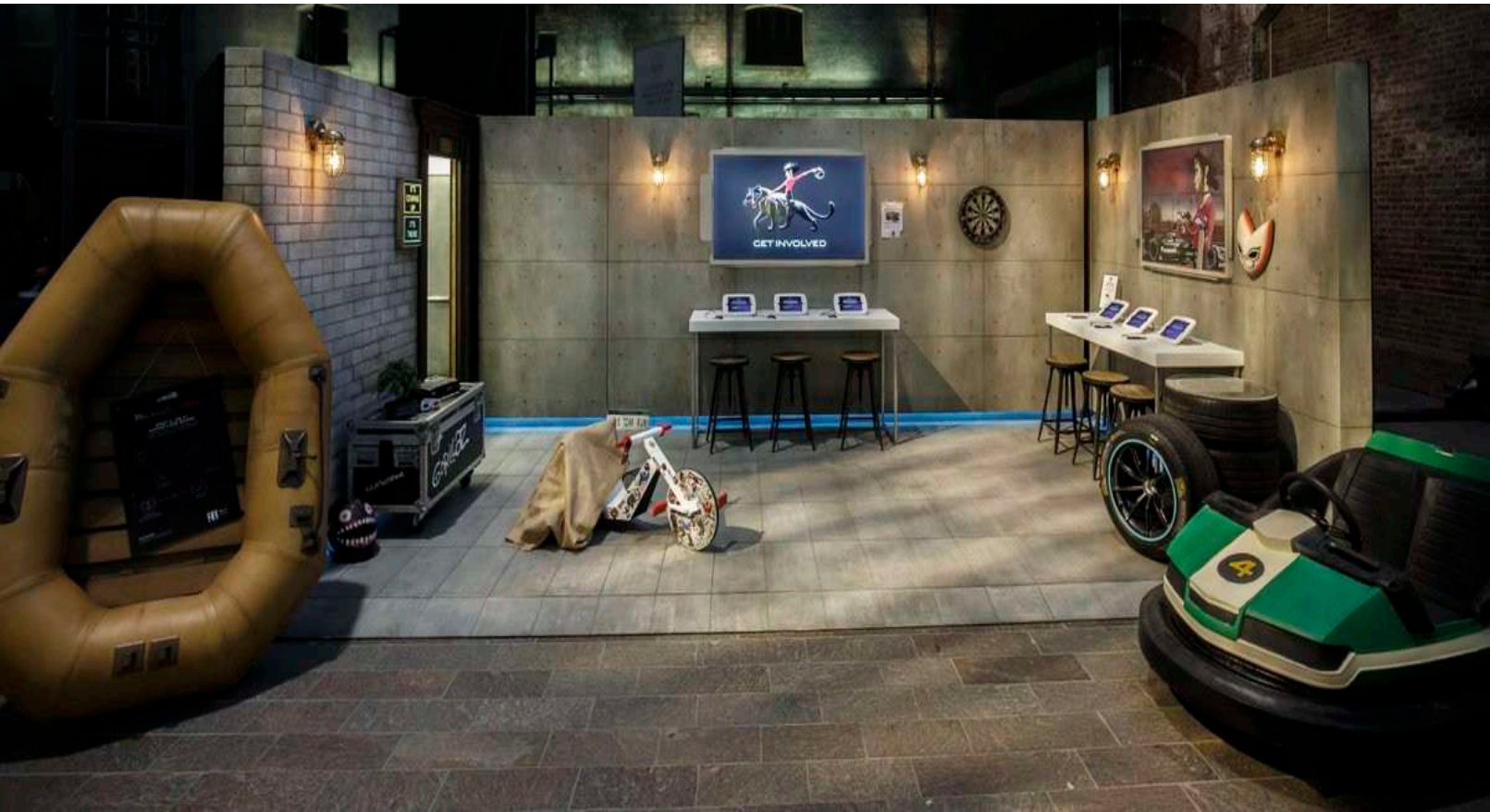
Noodle: I heard a crew member say that before we started shooting he was looking for the toilet and accidentally walked in on Murdoc naked.



Murdoc: Ah, sweet Daniel. I truly admire him. It takes a special kind of man to be smart enough to get employed at Jaguar and to look that empty at the same time.

Following Daniels's employment, Jaguar announced that the Spirit House basement would be open to the public as part of Tech Fest 2017, the exhibition was open to the public for three days in London between the 29th-31st of December. The exhibition is what would close the partnership between the two.

Noodle: We've worked with a lot of companies over the years, but I think Jaguar Racing will always be the most impactful for me. It gave me the opportunity to explore things about myself, and also being able to encourage young people to get into engineering, regardless of gender. These days, you can't persuade kids to do anything. You just have to show them what's cool, and they'll get the picture. At the moment, the word 'engineering' has a bad reputation. It sounds so dusty and dry and boring. But it's not. Engineering is apps, 3D modelling, graphics, design, computer science, things most of them are already into without realising it. Schools need to find a way to explain it better… that engineering isn't calculators and weirdos in lab coats. It's pure creativity, a place to use your imagination to really, truly change the world. I can't think of anything that's cooler than that.



Chapter 10
The New World

'In stillness, known to the world, do you feel this?
Trapped in my mind, hope I can find solitude
When connecting all of these pieces
I know you need this, I know you need this
I fold and unleash the beast
Unknown is what I would be
If my whole purpose here wasn't to speak'

Night of the Spinning Dead: The Cologne Palladium

Preceding yet another big live show, this time in collaboration with Telekom, Gorillaz decided to do another set of warm up live shows prior to the gig, playing in a specific part of Europe they have not yet stepped foot in.

June 14th 2017 *Nowy Teatr, Warsaw, Poland*

Murdoc: This was our first time ever performing in Poland. I loved playing in new areas during the Plastic Beach tour, so I wanted to raise the bar for this tour, playing in as many countries as we possibly can outside of the UK and the US.

June 16th 2017 *Várkert Bazár, Budapest, Hungary*

Murdoc: Hold on, let me get my socks on. This is some serious business that requires footwear.

2D: Er…this was our first show in Hungary. Always liked Budapest so this was a fun gig.

June 18th 2017 *MCK, Katowice, Poland*

Murdoc: Mmmm…show me your knickers.

June 20th 2017 *Gorillaz perform at the Palladium, Cologne, Germany*

For this live performance, Gorillaz once again utilised 360 capture technology for their debut show in Germany.

Russel: We saw the positive feedback and numbers from our Saturnz Barz 360 music video, so we teamed up again with Telekom to stream this venue in that format. You could go on YouTube, Facebook, or our app to watch the show live. And sure enough we were right! The stream attracted thousands of viewers from across the globe.

Hans-Christian Schwingen, Chief Brand: Telekom enables unique insights into the virtual world of Gorillaz by introducing new technology, connecting the real and the virtual worlds and letting fans worldwide be a part of the 360-degree music highlight.

Murdoc: (yawn) Christ…this isn't the first time we did something like this y'know. Yeah you can spin around and it's all 'Ooooo, it's like i'm there', but we've done this before yeah…I'm really thirsty.

We Are the Pride

July 1st 2017 *2D launches new Chelsea Nike kit with David Luiz*

2D: I was at a party the night before with a bunch of football geezers, picked up the wrong keys by mistake. Turns out those keys only opened the doors to Chelsea football club, Come on, Get in!

Noodle inhales sharply.

2D entered the club and made his way into the changing rooms for a quick shower, as he'd been in a total drunken slur the night before.

2D: I couldn't believe it! After I got out the shower there was a brand new Chelsea FC kit hanging there just waiting for me, my size n' all. I couldn't help meself. Next thing I knew, David Luiz was standing right behind me, I won't lie I was both bloody mortified but so excited at the same time.

Murdoc: You were excited to have a big hulking Brazilian man catch you sneaking around the showers half-naked?

2D: Yeah, I was actually.

Russel: I think I've seen a DVD like that.

A small sip of tea shoots out of Noodle's mouth as she begins to snicker to herself.

After quickly snapping a few selfies, the pair headed out to the CFC pitch, located at Stamford Bridge.

2D: We talked about a lot before we had a quick kickabout, our love of Samba, how much I was digging his wicked hair, and how I thought we were both kinda similar cos we're both sort of cartoony in how we look an' that.

Murdoc: He looks so bloody uncomfortable.

2D: It was quite nippy that day from what I remember.

Murdoc: Seriously, 2D, mate, I mean this from a place of genuine criticism right, you really dropped the baby on its head with this one.

2D: I dunno a few people enjoyed it, David had fun.

Murdoc screeches like a little girl

ABOVE
"Look at these funny looking elves"
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc: Ooooh David had fun! Look at me and my best friend DAVID!

The others are visibly holding in laughter, 2D remains sat with his arms crossed and a face like a slapped arnus.

2D: Look, I don't care what you lot think. I had fun, they're my favourite team.

Murdoc: You never even mentioned them a day in your life until now!

2D: I had a few times just nobody listens to me.

Murdoc: Let's see what the internet thinks, yeah?

2D: No, please not the tweets again.

2D goes to grab Murdoc's phone but is held in his seat by Russel's arm

Murdoc: @Capo10i who simply said 'you think we care about this lmaaao', oh oh this one! @CFCnic who said 'RT if you've never heard of 2D'

2D: Please Murdoc…

Murdoc: @NathanOAFC01 said 'What the fuck is this, delete now.'

Russel: Muds!

Russel points to the screen as he's chuckling.

Murdoc: Good catch Russ, @zach_montana said 'Stop announcing 2d shit and announce a player for god sake'

2D: Alright I get the point can you please stop reading tweets

Murdoc: One more just one, I promise. @NikPey101 said 'Not the promo I was expecting tbh. #cringealert' then he left you one of those little yellow crying faces.

2D slouches into his seat

Murdoc: C'mon mate, they aren't all bad. This ones just a photo of some shit with your face pasted onto it...

2D: OH SHUT UP YOU TWATTER! SHUT UP!

Strobelite

During the midst of the continuous barrage that was the Humanz promo assault, Gorillaz began recording another music video for their gigantic fifth studio album. However, something was odd about this video, specifically the events that occurred behind the scenes. After a working relationship of 17 years, Murdoc Niccals finally gave Jamie Hewlett the boot.

Murdoc: We've always had creative differences, but this was sort of the straw that broke the camel's back. He was already giving me issues for this video! He's been stealing all our interviews and credit, just like Damon! So I bugged him off, fired him, told him to hit the showers. I told Hewlett if he messed up once he'd be out the door, and now I'm at my limit.

Noodle: I couldn't believe it when I heard the news, Jamie has been such a vital and essential part of Gorillaz, without him, we wouldn't have been as successful and well remembered, so the fact that Murdoc just whisked him away after everything he's done for us over something petty, I couldn't look him in the eye for days.

2D: We came to an agreement that Murdoc wouldn't be featured or at the very least wouldn't have a big role in this next promo, I mean, did you see him in 'Saturnz Barz', he was flying around with his giblets swaying about! It was disgusting! Who would want to see something like that?

Murdoc: A lot of people, you'd be surprised really.

Noodle: The following day I tried to have a sit down with Jamie at a local cafe, he told me that he wouldn't return to direct any of our videos with Murdoc around, the negative feelings between the two were clearly mutual.

Russel: We were at a loss, we didn't have a director for our next video which was going to be for the track 'Strobelite', we all threw around some ideas, but interestingly enough I got this email from Parlophone, with a headline reading 'Here's Your Chance To Feature In A Gorillaz Music Video', what followed was details about our video shoot, where it was gonna happen, what time…when did we agree to this?

All 3 band members immediately jolt their heads to stare directly at Murdoc.

Murdoc: What…what, you think it was me?

They continue staring…awaiting an explanation.

Murdoc: Alright well…I could've told Parlophone that we were gonna invite fans…I could've hired a director behind your backs to help with the video…I could've set up and already rented out a venue to shoot the video at…

B 666
GORILLAZ
strobelite
A 0 4 6

The 3 band members' expressions all turn deadly…it looks like they're about to pummel the green bassist to a bloody pulp.

Noodle: Well…did you?

Murdoc:...y-Yes…

Russel: Murdoc Niccals…you greasy son of a bitch…you're lucky there's an interviewer here…or else I would be tearing you limb from limb.

2D: Jesus…who did you even get?

Murdoc: My old acolyte, Raoul Skinbeck, he's had a long and illustrious career in producing TV ads for a local double glazing company based in Stoke-on-Trent and I thought he'd be rather good at making pop videos…so…

Russel: No…ARE YOU-?

Noodle: ばかやろう!!!

2D stares at Murdoc, slack jawed, still comprehending the events unfolding in front of him… following a week's worth of well deserved bitterness and venom directed towards Niccals, time finally came for the video shoot.

Russel: We all kept an extra eye out for Murdoc at this shoot, I told him that if he moved from his seat, I would go nuclear on his ass.

Murdoc: No really, that's literally what he said, word for word.

Noodle: We played it casual for this video. I mean we couldn't do anything staged, a bunch of fans were everywhere wanting autographs and pictures from us, we had to do about a dozen retakes because of how many shots got interrupted, Russel eventually just fell asleep, it was so tiring.

Murdoc: Awkwardly enough, Jamie and his wife just so happened to be getting drinks at this club that same night, we just walked in and there they were at the bar! Jamie looked like he wanted to shoot a crossbow through my eyes.

STROBELITE

STROBELITE

STROB
STROB

STROBEL

2D: Can't say I blame him.

Murdoc: As a matter of fact, a lot of our friends just so happened to be there at the club that night, Peven Everett, Remi Kabaka, Bootie Brown, Vince Staples, Roses Gabor, Jamie Principle, Seye Adelekan, Jehnny Beth, and Posdnuos.

Russel: Hm…it's almost like we did a gig that day! And they just so happened to be at the video shoot after the gig! Isn't that funny how that work's out?

Murdoc: Give me a break. I was comatosed.

This is where the video begins, after Remi Kabaka is punched in the face by some unknown bar patron wearing a boxing glove.

Russel: That was actually me, Remi had a bit to drink and he just kept hogging the camera. I love the guy, don't get me wrong, but with the predicament we had that day, we had no time to be horsing around. So we ended up using that outtake as an intro.

Murdoc: Right but where'd you get the boxing glove Russ?

We see the band sitting around at one of the tables in the club, Russel is fast asleep, and Murdoc is clearly bored out of his mind, the song starts up and Noodle gets up out of her seat, striding to the dance floor.

Noodle: Things were really slow that day, we were all so exhausted and miserable, so I wanted to help pick up the mood a bit, after a few glasses of Hennessy, I got out there and began to bring the house down.

As she makes her way to the dance floor, Noodle begins to motion for 2D to join her and pulls him in with a lasso made of light. The pair dances as Peven Everett begins to sing. Murdoc stares at the two, with clear jealousy on his face.

Murdoc: Jealously? That's insane! Just cos 2D is out there dancing like a total mong doesn't mean I'm 'Jealous', it means he's unbearable.

As the dancing continues, Murdoc slips away from the slumbering Russel, and heads toward the bar, sitting down next to a moustachioed man in a red fez.

The mysterious man slips Murdoc a white card. Murdoc at first looks taken back, but then turns away and grins.

Murdoc: His name was Juan, he's a leather goods salesman, very polite, well mannered, he handed me what I thought was his business card, but it turned out it was his number and address…I think he wanted to have a bit of fun…I wasn't sure at first but then I thought…eh, anything would be better than being at this god awful shoot, so I'm all yours Juan, show me what goods you have to sell.

Noodle, 2D, and the rest of the club patrons continue to dance to the music, blissfully unaware of the exchange that had just transpired.

2D: We ended up having to re-use and loop a bunch of shots we did in the video, mainly because again, it was difficult to shoot, and halfway through the video Murdoc left with some man. We didn't see him until the morning after.

The Strobelite promo was complete.

Murdoc: God…what a cock-up that was.

Russel: The whole thing would've gone way differently if you just-

Murdoc: Shhhh, Russel! You need to hush! You'll wake the baby…

August 4th 2017 *Strobelite single is released*

The single only charted in the US, reaching #22 on the US Hot Rock Songs chart.

Murdoc: I can understand why, this was our sixth or seventh single we pushed out from the album, at least I know the Hot Rock Songs Chart will be with us till the very end…

August 7th 2017 *Strobelite video is released*

2D: This is easily I think the worst video we have ever released, it's just rubbish. I will admit though, I enjoyed dancing with you Noodle. Even though it looked like you were gonna throw up at several points in the video…I suppose french wine will do that to you.

Murdoc: You think that's the worst video we've done? Says the guy who made 'Sleeping Powder'. Come on now, no one wanted to see that…

Noodle: This promo would also mark the final time we would work with Passion Pictures, who did help us with this video like they always have, but just didn't feel the same er…passion…about working with us without Jamie. So this was the end of our work with them. Our videography future just seemed bleak at this point…

Russel: This was the first, last, and only time we would ever work with Raoul Skinbeck, as I tried saying earlier, the main reason this video was such a disaster was mostly because of his involvement. It's why Noodle can direct her own videos, 2D can direct his own videos. But Murdoc is never allowed to…ever…

The Rejects

After wrapping up their performance in South Korea, and finishing the filming process of Strobelite, Gorillaz returned to the UK for a one month break before hitting the dusty roads of North America once more.

August 14th 2017 *Gorillaz return to Notting Hill, London*

Murdoc: We had around a month for some R&R before our tour went back into full swing. It was going great, the four of us had never been better…well, besides 2D's little temper tantrums every now and then. He was being driven by his own ego, making demands for setlists, play this, play that. Sleeping Powder, Melancholy Hill, Revolving Doors, 5/4, Spitting Out the Demons…It was starting to really get on my last nerve. At one point he cut out Ike Turner's part of Every Planet We Reach is Dead and sort of feestyled this synth ending. The crowd loved it, but I was getting really sick of his antics. I'm surprised a huge boil didn't grow on his head that resembled his hose. Still, I kept my cool, stayed…moderately kind to him.

Murdoc's upper lip begins to twitch as his eyes come into focus, like tiny bullets his pupils set on the floor.

Murdoc: When we got back to Notting Hill, Noodle found this poster for a gig over at the Camden Brownhouse, some group called 'The Rejects,' and it actually mentioned us. Gorillaz. Apparently someone we'd worked with was brave enough to play some of our tracks live without cutting me in. Y'know we had some time to kill so we figured, 'why not make a show?' Unsurprisingly the place looked and stank just as we left it, only with a few less bullet holes in the walls. The real surprise was the act they had on stage, this great big blue Frankenstein-type monster, and next to him, a Japanese looking guitar prodigy, with a distinctly familiar sound. It was our Cyborg Noodle. Seems as though the real reason behind her no show at Margate was finding her own way musically. They were good, too good. I'd created a monster, and if I didn't play my cards right, they could be my band's downfall. I've worked too hard for too long to have a zombie and a tin can in a wig to steal our limelight.

Over the course of two hours, the audience stood in silence from amazement, 2D almost moved to tears.

Murdoc: I could see how much 2D admired this Billy character, "voice of an angel" is what he said. In my almost twenty years of knowing that gimp, I can't say I can recall him ever being as mesmerised by a performance as he was by Billy's singing. It was clearly something incredibly special, inspiring even, to him. I wanted to give him that, if that makes sense, I wanted to give him that sort of enthusiasm about himself, maybe even humble him a bit with a gift. So I took Billy's heart.

You what?

Murdoc: Yeah, knocked the bastard out cold and cut him open, replaced 2D's heart with his. I know, you're probably thinking 'why on earth would you do that?' Truth is I'm not too sure myself, it just seemed like the right thing to do in the moment, I'm trying to sort of make up for how awful I'd been in the past wasn't I? And one of the things I'd done was…well…I pinched his organs during our second album.

6
THE REJECTS

You did?

Murdoc: Check the first chapter, I definitely mentioned it. Chloroformed him and stole his organs. I'd hit it too hard and mine weren't cutting it, so I swapped out my dusty old black ones for his lovely juicy pink ones.

You're completely insane!

Murdoc: It was a long time ago! That shit wouldn't fly these days.

That's got to be one of the worst things you've ever done to your bandmate.

Murdoc: DUHHHHHH. Why do you think I'm stealing him a new heart?

I-I…

Murdoc: Just go with it, yeah? So I chloroformed the pair of them and we played a little game of 2D rejuvenation ha ha ha…

This can't have actually happened.

Murdoc: Ask Jamie if you don't believe me, it was his idea. Anyway (pause) don't think I fully thawed out my plan, Cyborg wasn't too pleased.

She tried to kill you again?

Murdoc: What? Oh, no. Kill switch, remember?

So what happened then?

Murdoc: Well, I'm not quite sure. I didn't think robots could have emotions but I guess, since she was still technically part Noodle, she could. It was like some kind of cyber-depression, her circuits were shutting down, she wouldn't acknowledge anyone, it was a really sad sight. I didn't know what to do so I ended up factory resetting her.

And that does?

Murdoc: Well it sends her back to her programmed HQ, which is - was Plastic Beach. She went back to the middle of the ocean, dunno what happened to her after she left.

And how do the others feel about this?

Murdoc: They don't know, not even 2D, never got round to telling him. They don't need to know everything I get up to though, do they?

Oh, right. So is this-

Murdoc: Nope. It's not relevant. But this is a biography, isn't it? A documentation of our ventures? Figured it was worth mentioning. I couldn't bring myself to tell the others, they were really passionate about The Rejects, even asked them to play with us at the next Demon Dayz fest. They'll figure it out…eventually. So now, I had my first heart just lying around.

I thought about keeping it as a spare but, well, collaborators don't come cheap, so I auctioned it. Time is of the essence when you're flogging human organs, and sticking it on eBay wasn't proving to be a very fruitful endeavour, they've got rules against that stuff apparently…turned to some dodgy sites, eventually found a buyer for it and all seemed well. But when the payment came through, they'd sent me somet called titcoin. I thought they were having a laugh but apparently it's the bee's knees for these types of shady backroom deals. I went to the bank and showed them the email but they said it's not a viable currency within the United Kingdom, nor any of Europe for that matter. The only place where you could convert these digital tokens into real dough was in Patagonia, in the tip of South America. I'm telling you, anywhere beyond Tijuana makes no sense, it's only this bottom continent that seems to have its head screwed on right if you ask me.

After sending off his rotten heart wrapped in a bin bag at the local post office, the deranged bassist booked the cheapest flight to Patagonia he could find to collect his earnings.

Murdoc: This is gonna be fantastic, PATAGONIA! I'd never heard of it before today but it looks great. Marble Caves, white water rafting, the famous Perito Moreno glacier…what's the nightlife like? Weird amount of ice bars on Trip Wizard. Why would I go to Latin America to freeze my tits off…? You know what, it's fine. I'm sure there'll be other places to go for a quick pint.

After frantically stuffing his suitcase and dancing like a Texan who'd just struck oil, Murdoc hopped into the driver's seat of his vintage convertible and raced to Heathrow Airport.

Murdoc: So I rolled up to the airport in my 1961 Cadillac, went to the bar for a couple dozen glasses of the cheapest piss they had to offer, bought a dinky looking hat, and made my way to terminal 6¾ gate. But when I got to boarding, these two hulking security guards dragged me off into an office. Turns out I'd parked in a disabled spot, I tried explaining to them that it's alright, y'know like I'm eligible because of my overreliance on the odd class of courage every now and then. That didn't go down too well, I wasn't drunk driving, honest! I'd just had a few glasses of scotch at the airport bar before queuing to board the flight. Must've not explained myself very well because the next thing I knew I was being hauled down to Lavender Hill Police department.

August 29th 2017 *Murdoc is arrested at Heathrow Airport*

Murdoc: I was banged up…again! I've lost count of how many times this has happened now, it's getting a bit ridiculous. Google 'Gorillaz bassist arrested' and see what comes up, you'll probably get over a hundred thousand results at this point, doesn't look great on a CV I can tell you that much. They sat me down and thankfully the whole drunk driving charge was cleared up, but because of me parking in the wrong place they'd slapped a £65 fine on me and, AND they had the nerve to tow my rideee! I did my best to pull a few strings, being a cartoon rockstar has its perks like that, but I think that only made things worse. Because of my criminal record they just threw me in jail with all the other gormless muppets who forgot to do their taxes that month, didn't even bother giving me a trial. That was it really, my wheels were impounded, I'd missed my flight, and my band was off to the states to finish our tour. I was done for.

ABOVE
Wormwood Scrubs

Murdoc: What really ticks me off is that this was supposed to be our grand comeback, so how's it gonna look when people switch on the telly and see me being hauled over to The Scrubs? The answer, bad press. And contrary to popular belief not all publicity is good, I dunno who said that but they need a good seeing to, have they even heard of twitter? I had my good friend Alan Turing from the bank of England convince the authorities to keep this out of the public eye.

I'm sorry?

Murdoc: He's on the new fifty pound note mate, I was trying to make bribery sound cool like they do over stateside, they're all like 'my good friend Benjamin whatshisface.'

Oh, I see. Continue.

Murdoc: Everything from there onwards was simple, apparently 2D drafted in Junior Dan to cover for me on the music front, they'd got him in before when I overslept during one of our recording sessions for the first record, him and D got on well so I kind of saw that coming. I don't take any issue with Dan but I needed someone on the frontlines who I could rely on to fill that enormous void I'd left, and to keep everything to my liking. At first I considered calling up Daffy Duck to fill in for me, then I remembered most venues have a strict 'no birds' policy. I was in luck though, a good friend of mine, Ace Copular, was in Manhattan that week. You've probably heard of him, this washed up B-list Hollywood celebrity on a 90s kids reality show called 'The Powder Puff Chicks' or something stupid like that. Noodle was really into it back in the day, so I knew if I set her up for a quick meet and greet with this guy she'd be all over him, like a moth to a flame, it was only a matter of time before she'd convince 2D to bring him onboard as long-term replacement. Ace and I go way back, we met at a party in L.A. while we were trying to get that Gorillaz film off the ground, he was there doing a feature length adaptation for the show he starred in. He actually asked if we could do a track for them to use in it but our schedules were all messed so we never got round to doing it, I think there's this part where you can see an advert for one of our live gigs in a paper one of the characters are reading, this pink eyed ape looking feller. I'm getting sidetracked, point is we got on.

BELOW
Imprisoned bass player
"Here we go again..."
MURDOC NICCALS

September 5th 2017 *Ace joins Gorillaz on tour*

Murdoc: I let Ace in on what was going on my end, told him if he could keep his mouth shut I'd give him a cut of however much 0,004885 BTC is worth. He played ball as expected and stayed in contact with me. I'd give him various instructions from time to time to make sure things wouldn't get out of hand.

You've spent the past two years trying to convince your bandmates that you really have changed for the better, is secretly influencing the direction of Gorillaz through Ace really the smartest move you could make?

Murdoc: It's not about having control over them…well, it is a bit. But it's not what you think. I have changed, really. Not sure if it's for the best just yet but I have my reasons. I had a lot of time to think when I was locked up in Dungeon Abbey, and I realised that…maybe…maybe…I do need them, to make Gorillaz work I mean. Maybe I do give myself too much credit. And I missed them, I genuinely did, I felt awful during those years in jail, no visits, no phone calls, no letters…birthday wishes…nothing. It made me realise that they're all I have really, so even If I don't really like them all that much sometimes, I need to hold onto them…because they're all I know.

…

Murdoc: (Ahem) Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't trust those tossers to do an album without the correct help (awkward chuckle) right…?

ABOVE
New bass player
"Do I amuse you?"
ACE

Humanz Tour

North American Leg Of Humanz Tour (Part One)

What Gorillaz had planned for their second world tour would be incredible. Something that would make the Plastic Beach tour seem like a rehearsal leg. Playing in more countries and states that they have yet to debut in. Playing in certain areas for the first time in years. To help us out with this section of the book, Gorillaz roadie, Hamish Trombone (his name has been changed for legal reasons), has been asked to recount some stories for this tour.

Hamish Trombone: People say to me, Hamish you're a jammy wee bastard, life on the road, hanging out with rock stars, going to concerts every night. You're living the dream, man. And all that with an o-level in woodwork and a chequered criminal record. Aye, back in the early days that's exactly what I thought too. Must be nearly 16 years ago I went on my first tour. I was young(er) then, still had a bit of hair and at least three more teeth so I was up for the crack. But even for a scrapper like me it was a baptism of fire. I was no stranger to chaos and carnage but Gorillaz dialled it up to the 11. I won't lie though, we had some great times, the bits I can remember. Got the scars to prove it!

Hamish holds up left arm stump

Hamish Trombone: But nearly two decades of touring with Gorillaz took its toll. I don't mind the squalor so much - I've got seven kids and an incontinent pit bull. It's not even the workplace injuries or gunshot wounds, It's the mental trauma. Those scars never heal. See, most bands go hell for leather when they start out, destroying hotel rooms and kidnapping elephants etc. Then they grow up a bit, you know?

Murdoc: I'm sorry, who the hell are you? When did you come in here?

July 8th 2017 *Huntington Bank Pavilion, Chicago, US.*
July 10th 2017 *Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Canada.*
July 12th 2017 *Blue Hills Bank Pavilion, Boston, US.*
July 13th 2017 *Penn's Landing, Philadelphia, US.*
July 15th 2017 *Plains Of Abraham, Quebec City, Canada.*
July 17th 2017 *Merriweather Post Pavilion, Columbia, US.*

Murdoc: We had to lick a new coach for this tour, the one we'd used for years was looking a bit knackered. The tour bus we got was just fantastic. Joy Division used it back in the 70's, a piece of history really, got it cheap too.

Hamish Trombone: Bit of scene-setting first. We've each got our own bunks on the bus, crew and the band. Except Murdoc, who designed himself a wee den at the back. Velvet drapes, piranha tank, sandwich toaster, fold-out Ouija board. An 'artiste suite', he called it. We all called it the Captain's Cabin, especially after a few days when it started to hum like a fishing trawler. The manky arseclown. Oh, and Murdoc blew most of the tour budget upgrading that room, so we were forced to use the cheapest bus company on the market. That thing was a deathtrap on wheels. Suspension was shot, brakes non-existent, not to mention the suspected human remains in the luggage hold (forensics inconclusive). One night, bouncing along a desert highway the TV- not a snazzy flatscreen but an old boxy job the size of a filing cabinet- slid out of its bracket and smashed into 2D's head. Luckily, the wee lad can take a knock - I once saw him get run over by a monster truck. Anyway, minutes later, a clock fell off the wall and cracked him again. It was spooky, like the bus had it in for us, you know? On the back of the clock, someone had written "THIS BUS IS SHITE". In blood. One of the crew swore it was Peter Hook's handwriting. My theory is Hook cursed that bus years ago when he was touring, 'cos it brought us nothing but disaster from the outset. Exploding tyres, breakdowns (mental and mechanical), vanishing luggage, pestilence.

2D: Yeah! It was the most infamous Monster Truck of all time. Gravedigger! Knocked me right in the head. It was so cool! God, I forgot how much I love Monster Trucks. The trucks of course, not the film. The film was shite. It wasn't even about the monster trucks, like, it was just about trucks that were monsters. It was a box office bomb! Deserves to be. You're getting scammed from the title alone! You see a film titled Monster Trucks, you think of the bloody monster trucks! Not this rubbish! It's horrible.

Murdoc: I'm surprised it can even talk.

July 13th 2017 *Penn's Landing, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

Russel: We had the track 'Empire Ants' planned for this venue, but unfortunately due to rain and lightning we had to delay both our set and Vince's warm up, leading us to cut it.

2D: That's the price you pay for playing outdoors… Wanna hear a funny story? A fan threw me her knickers. I enjoyed that, but they were a bit dirty so I washed them after the show and gave them back to her at the next show.

2D: Now she brings her laundry to every show. It's becoming a bit of a burden, especially the hand wash only items. The recent warm weather has made drying easier, though. So I count my blessings.

Russel: They say that what happens on tour stays on tour. I can say that I am very serious all the time, but I can have fun. Because sometimes you have to laugh, you know? Even when the world is spinning towards the abyss, and Man is stepping on us all and an army of super-robots is threatening to turn us into brainless cattle, you still HAVE TO LAUGH, right, right? So why WHY ARE WE NOT LAUGHING?

2D: Uh…yeah… What he said

Asian Leg Of Humanz Tour (Part One)

July 28th 2017 *Fuji Rock Festival, Yuzawa, Japan.*

Noodle: This was our first time playing in Japan since 2001! It felt good to be back in my homeland. I hadn't been here since my Maazu quest and I got some odd looks, but other than that it was fine.

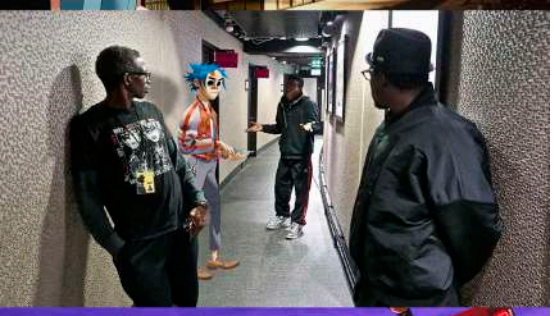
July 30th 2017 *Valley Rock Festival, Icheon, South Korea.*

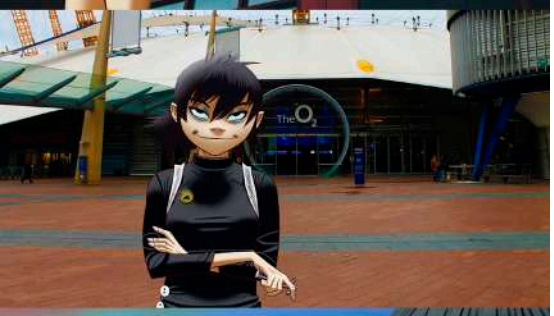
Russel: Before our first ever South Korean show, the four of us and all of our collaborators went for a genuine Korean BBQ. It was divine.

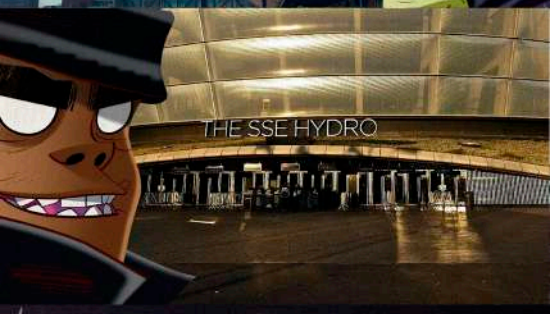
2D: Vegetarian options were a bit limited.

North American Leg Of Humanz Tour (Part Two)

August 11th 2017 *Outside Lands, San Francisco, US.*
September 14th 2017 *SIR Studios, New York City, US.*
September 16th 2017 *The Meadow, New York City, US.*
September 18th 2017 *Fox Theatre, Detroit, US.*
September 20th 2017 *Roy Wilkins Auditorium, Saint Paul, US.*
September 22nd 2017 *Sprint Centre, Kansas City, US.*
September 24th 2017 *Life Is Beautiful Festival, Las Vegas, US.*
September 26th 2017 *Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Denver, US.*
September 30th 2017 *KeyArena, Seattle, US.*
October 4th 2017 *Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, San Francisco, US.*
October 5th 2017 *The Forum, Inglewood, US.*
October 8th & 15th 2017 *Austin City Limits Music Festival, Austin, US.*
October 11th 2017 *Infinite Energy Arena, Duluth, US.*
October 13th 2017 *III Points, Miami, US.*







August 11th 2017 *Outside Lands, San Francisco, California.*

Hamish Trombone: When we were driving through America for the next leg, the driver took a wrong turn -we don't call him Wrong Way Ron for nothing and we ended up at some roadside biker bar all buzzing neon and bullet holes. Coyote's Coffin, it was called. Not the kind of place you bring your ma, but we needed directions. 2D drew the short straw (there was only one straw, to be fair) so in he went. Anyway, a few minutes later, all hell breaks loose. Guns going off, glass smashing. Then 2D legs it back on to the bus and we roar out of there, an angry mob in our wake. So now we're being chased through the desert by a cut-throat biker gang. After a few miles the bikers overtake us and we skid to a halt on the highway, surrounded. Guns pointed at us, the lot. Terrifying, it was, and I grew up in Glasgow. Luckily, the tour manager had a plan for just this kind of situation. She opened the door and sent Noodle out to 'negotiate'. I closed the curtains, then 2D opened them back up again. Murdoc locked himself into a flight case.We turned the telly up really loud. Jeopardy, I think it was. Russ aced all the questions. Smartest drummer I've ever known. Anyway, half an hour later, Noodle let herself in, put on her slippers, and said goodnight, sweet as you like. Ron fired up the bus and off we went, Then Murdoc skulks out, says not to worry, everything's sorted, he's given Coyote's Coffin one star on TripWizard.

September 14th 2017 *SIR Studios, New York City, New York.*

Noodle: This was our first live performance with our new bassist, Ace.

Russel: It was early days for Ace being with us, he hadn't quite got it down if you know what I'm saying, a lot of the tracks he had to learn on the spot.

2D: We restarted 'Sex Murder Party' four times at this one. He just kept cocking it up, we all have to start somewhere I suppose. Y'know I'm not even sure if he knew how to even play bass before that night.

September 30th 2017 *KeyArena, Seattle, Washington.*

2D: We were around two weeks into having Ace in the band at this point, and despite him sharing some sort of strange spiritual connection with Murdoc, he's all round a lovely bloke.

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It's not RAEL

2D: He was really interested in a couple demos I'd been recording during our travels. There was this one 'Idaho'. It was a highlight for him, convinced me to play it at this show. I didn't have the lyrics quite down at this point, so some of it was made up on the spot.

Russel: I liked this early etching of the track, although we may have premiered this one a little undercooked, we had to restart after falling out of sync.

Noodle: 2D didn't exactly give us enough time to rehearse this one properly, yet insisted that we played it immediately.

2D: It's not my fault neither of you two could keep the beat. It's some acoustic twanging, a little bit of piano and a drum loop. How hard is that really?

October 5th 2017 *The Forum, Inglewood, California.*

2D: We had a very special guest that night, his name was Arthur, the same Arthur who took care of Bobby Womack. He travelled the world with me and Murdoc. It was lovely to see him again, we introduced him on stage.

Russel: I'd never met the dude before but he was acting like some proper hype man, screaming and jumping around getting the crowd all riled up and ready to party.

2D: I was devastated when I heard the news of Bobby's passing. He was a very gentle person in his essence, but also something truly magical about his voice. The dichotomy of that led him to live a very precarious life. But through it all, incredible soul. I mean, It's very sad that I'll never see him again… That night the two of us, Arthur and I, came together once more and channelled Bobby's energy, beamed it onto the stage. He was there with us, you could feel it. God bless you Arthur, you're a true joy

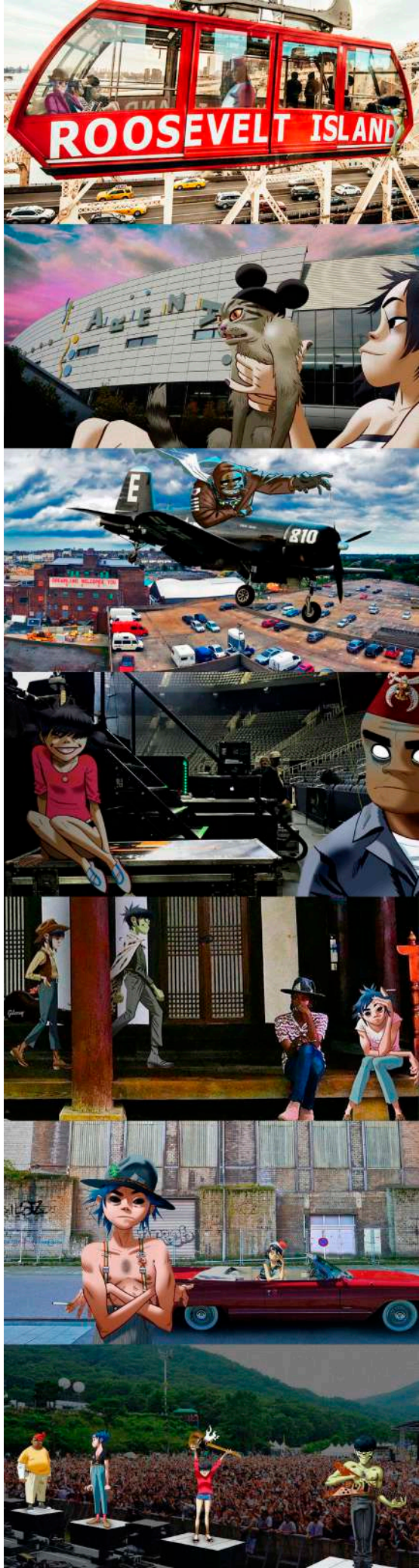
October 13th 2017 *III Points, Miami, Florida.*

2D immediately lights a joint.

Is that courtesy of the festival?

2D: No.

Oh, I just figured, because I know III Points Festival usually gives joints out to the artists as gifts–



2D: I don't smoke anything if I haven't watched it been rolled, ya know what I mean? I've learned my lessons the hard way. Anyhow, I've done quite a lot of writing for a new album. I performed a song that I wrote in Idaho called 'Idaho' in Seattle and Los Angeles. Another song called 'Hollywood' which I recorded in Hollywood, which we rehearsed for tonight, but we didn't feel that it was ready. I've got a couple more that I might try tomorrow, but we're running out of time anyway. But um, no, yeah, no. I've been doing that a lot. Yeah, it's great. Well fuckin', record labels –

A sudden smashing sound and shout from Russel and Ace playing ping pong behind us steals his attention.

2D: Russel! I don't like your table tennis…method. It's… weird. You're shit, fucking walking around like you're a fucking, just-

Russel is talking in the background, but nobody can quite make out what he is saying

2D: -Well, all right! But fucking take it out on your drums — but no fills!

2D turns back to me, grinning.

2D: Sorry.

No, it's alri-

2D: Oh, band dynamic!

Asian Leg Of Humanz Tour (Part Two)

October 27th 2017 *Fiesta de los Muertos, Dubai, UAE.*

Noodle: Once every 33 years, our planet races through the trail of a comet and the sky explodes with thousands upon thousands of meteors. I witnessed this on the summit of Mount Fuji, in the black of night. And let me say, what I saw that night couldn't even be the warm-up act to what you'll get from our performance at Fiesta de Los Muertos.

2D: I called up an old friend of mine, Eslam Jawaad. He rapped on Clint Eastwood for us over in Damascus back in 2010, I knew I wanted to work with him again after the first time.

European Leg Of Humanz Tour

November 1st 2017 *Rockhal, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg*
November 2nd 2017 *Wiener Stadthalle, Vienna, Austria*
November 4th 2017 *Royal Arena, Copenhagen, Denmark*
November 5th 2017 *Oslo Spektrum, Oslo, Norway*
November 6th 2017 *Hovet, Stockholm, Sweden*
November 8th 2017 *Samsung Hall, Zürich, Switzerland*
November 9th 2017 *Geneva Arena, Geneva, Switzerland*
November 11th 2017 *Zenith, Munich, Germany*
November 13th 2017 *Aréna, Budapest, Hungary*
November 14th 2017 *O2 Arena, Prague, Czech Republic*
November 17th 2017 *Max-Schmeling-Halle, Berlin, Germany*
November 18th 2017 *Mitsubishi Electric Halle, Düsseldorf, Germany*
November 19th 2017 *Sporthalle Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany*
November 21st 2017 *Ziggo Dome, Amsterdam, Netherlands*
November 22nd 2017 *Forest National, Brussels, Belgium*
November 24th & 25th 2017 *Zénith Paris, Paris, France*
November 27th 2017 *Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK*
November 29th 2017 *SSE Hydro, Glasgow, UK*
December 1st 2017 *Manchester Arena, Manchester, UK*
December 2nd 2017 *Arena Birmingham, Birmingham, UK*
December 4th & 5th 2017 *O2 Arena, London, UK*

November 24th & 25th 2017 *Zénith Paris, Paris, France*

Russel: We all remember this one.

Noodle: How could you forget?

2D: (Sneezes)

December 1st 2017 *Manchester Arena, Manchester, UK*

Russel: Not a lot to say about this one that hasn't already been said, for the most part we were all dazed, had the flu making rounds on the tour bus. None of us bothered talking to the audience, we just wanted to be in and out that night.

2D: The sky turned neon green that night. It felt like the end of the world, I distinctly remember blaring 'Every Planet We Reach Is Dead', it was like screaming into the void. Echoing synths over broken hearts and shattered ceramic tiles…

Russel: The whole atmosphere that day was uncomfortable, wasn't so long since the attacks. You could tell a lot of the kids were on edge.

2D: That's one night I'm never gonna forget.

Russel: This night also marked the release of our final single for Humanz, 'Andromeda DRAM Special'. D and I were in a pizza shop as it was released, listening to that track after a very, frankly, disturbing afternoon, it was a great pick-me-up.

South American Leg Of Humanz Tour

December 13th 2017 *Primavera 0, Montevideo, Uruguay*
December 16th 2017 *BUE, Buenos Aires, Argentina*
March 18th 2018 *Vive Latino, Mexico City, Mexico*
March 20th 2018 *Movistar Arena, Santiago, Chile*
March 24th 2018 *Festival Estéreo Picnic, Bogotá, Colombia*
March 27th 2018 *Asuncionico, Asunción, Paraguay*
March 30th 2018 *Jockey Club, São Paulo, Brazil*

March 18th 2018 *Vive Latino, Mexico City, Mexico*

Russel: This was our first performance in Mexico since 2002, the last gig we played here was bit of a wreck. A lot of laws and spines were broken that day…but this one seemed to go amazingly well, at least compared to the last time.

2D: Before we weren't sure if we could even play here due to Murdoc's…(ahem), difficulties with the local authorities, but since we had Ace with us instead, we could stroll in and out no problem.

March 20th 2018 *Movistar Arena, Santiago, Chile*

2D: Humanz was pretty much over and done with at this point, these South American shows were like the encore, so we figured 'let's tease another track' from my next album.

Russel: Hollywood was introduced to the world via Santiago. You're welcome Chile.

March 24th 2018 *Festival Estéreo Picnic, Bogotá, Colombia*

Noodle: Nice bit at the end here, we had a fan come on stage with a scythe during Clint Eastwood. Fun way to debut in Colombia.

2D: I always get a little nervous when I go somewhere for the first time. Will people like me? Will the food go down well? If not, will the bathrooms have locks? Because it BOTHERS me a little when people ask me for selfies when I'm in the bathroom!

Russel: Calm down D.

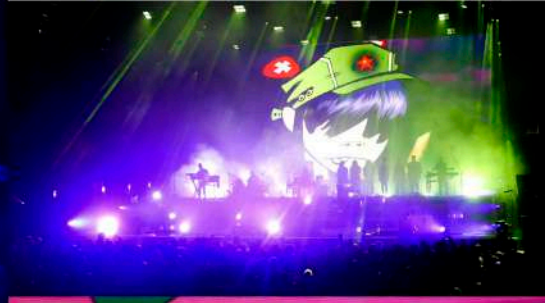
2D: NO RUSS. I WON'T. COS WHEN I AM HAVING A SHIT RIGHT? AND SOME BLOKE IS BUSTING THE DOOR DOWN WITH MA PANTS DROPPED, TAKING PICTURES. IT'S RATHER FRUSTRATING!...

March 30th 2018 *Jockey Club, São Paulo, Brazil*

Noodle: Jeff caught some sort of case of the flu at our last show in Paraguay and was sick for a few days leaving me to play solo.

2D: He probably got it from you, the poor bastard. That's what happens when you share sweaty guitar straps.

Russel: This whole tour was a standout experience really, being able to meet so many people from around the world, playing with these large group of musicians…really, and apologies if this gets preachy, but I think it was really this tour that made me realise that everyone under the Gorillaz umbrella is really like one big extended family. Before every show we would all huddle together and do this sort of, circle huddle hug. Wishing each other good luck and so forth. And you don't get that kind of love from so many different people often. These people are all amazing, and I can't wait to tour again with them.



Garage Palace

Nearing the end of the Humanz promotion cycle, Gorillaz made one last push to promote their final Phase 4 release, Humanz Super Deluxe.

Russel: We had hours upon hours of content that we recorded in the studio, but ultimately didn't make the cut on the record. Murdoc never released any sort of B-Side album for Plastic Beach, I guess EMI just wasn't willing to cooperate with him. But we all wanted to do another b-side collection akin to 'G-Sides' and 'D-Sides' for this record. The only problem is, we now live in a world where b-sides aren't exactly the way to go about. The industry has changed too much, nobody's really buying CD album releases anymore, let alone a leftovers followup. So we had to go about releasing these unreleased tracks in a more creative way.

Noodle: One of the big things in the music world these days is vinyls! When I was growing up, vinyl records were considered a relic of the past, they sort of fell out of fashion. However, around the time digital sales went up, oddly enough vinyl sales went up as well. Now, CD's and tapes have fallen into obscurity, and vinyls are now considered the most common format of owning physically released music. Like we did with our previous side albums, where we took advantage of how the industry worked back then, we figured we would do the same thing in the current landscape today.

2D: Yeah but the way we went about this left a lot of holes in people's pockets, but a wise yet pathetic man once said "Being a Gorillaz fan don't come cheap".

What the band came up with was a super deluxe re-release of Humanz, featuring at least a dozen unreleased tracks and demos.

Russel: We wanted to put out the tracks on this huge box set. With an additional artbook and some other goodies. Thought it would be a cool release for our most die-hard fans.

2D: I know a lot of people can't afford this sort of stuff, but the internet does exist so I'm not sorry.

To help promote the release of this super deluxe bundle, Gorillaz released a new single, with a visual accompaniment to go along. The single in question? 'Garage Palace' featuring Little Simz.

Russel: We thought this cut song from the Humanz recording sessions would be the strongest to showcase this super deluxe release. We premiered it live back in June and it received a lot of positive feedback.

Noodle: Little Simz was just a joy to work with. I was really struck by her kind of individualism… She's just not part of a scene, which is great for her.

Little Simz: I guess it all kickstarted one summer day in London, I actually got introduced to the team through Kano, Kano was the link. And he kinda just made that happen, which I am so grateful for and y'know Kano is someone who has always had my back and is obviously a legend as you all know.

ABOVE
"These two alone could rewrite music history"
RUSSEL HOBBS

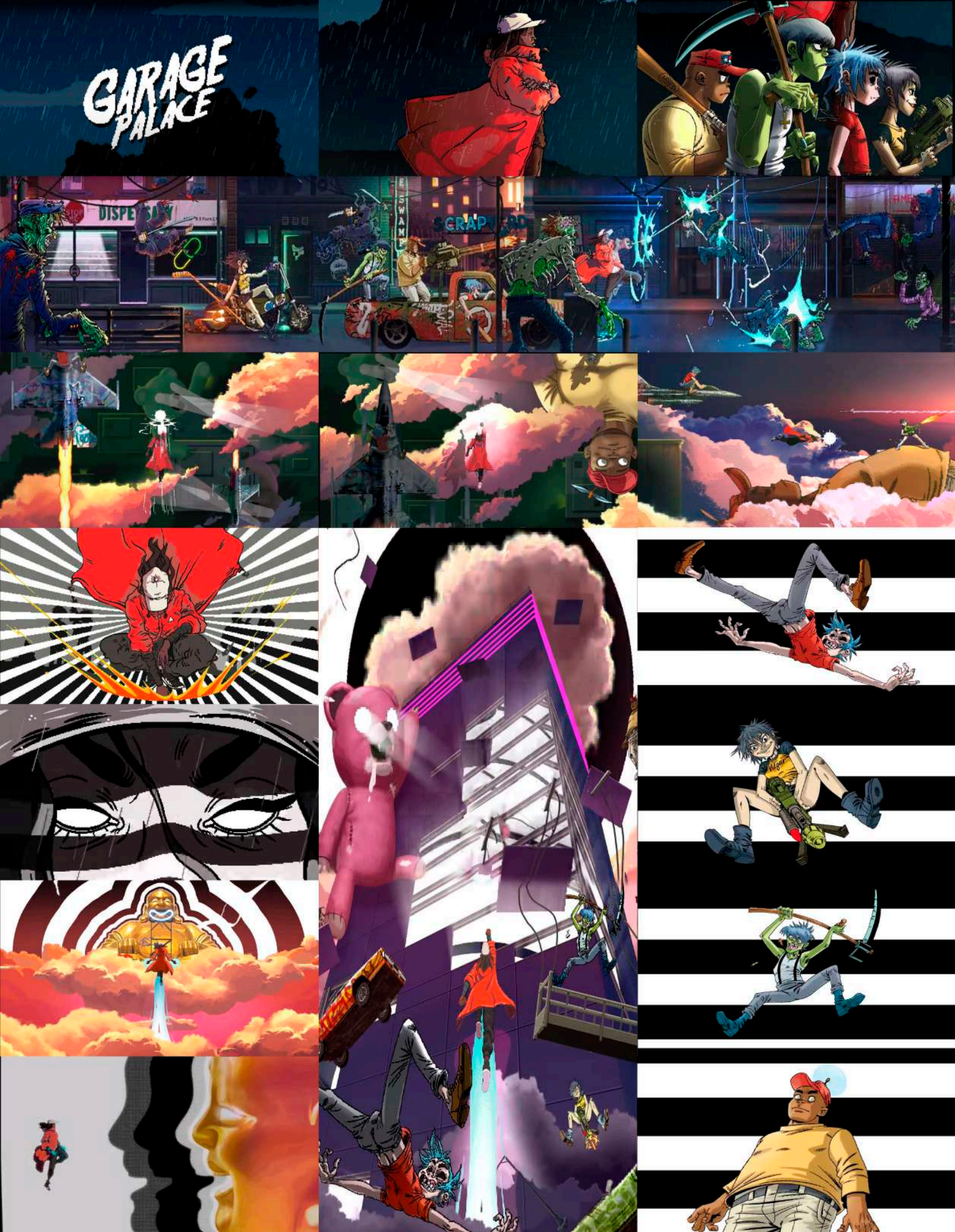
Little Simz: I remember I came into the studio, it was a vibe, they were playing me some of the other songs off the record, and I remember feeling like "oh my god, this is sick, but this is also so nerve wracking" because they showed me where the bar is. So, it's like, I know I can't come in with nothing less than that. But no one made me feel like that, it's just me putting that on myself because I knew I wanted to deliver, I wanted to do well, and I wanted obviously whatever we create to be amazing. So yeah, they played me 'Garage Palace' and explained the idea and instantly like "Oh, palace flows. Rain falls from the heavens to my palace rooftop". I remember that was just in my head, and I wrote my verses, I remember the original version we done, messed with my vocals a bit, pitched stuff down, and slowed stuff down, just really I was getting to know their style of working and they were getting mine so it's always fun to have that process together and now we've managed to create something that goes off everywhere we play it, so yeah it's incredible.

Russel: One of my favourites of hers was 'Good For What' which was for her upcoming album at the time. What stands out to me about Little Simz, she's come a long way, she started off in the grime scene, doing music that was considered 'in', kinda like Kano. I think from the beginning it was good stuff but it wasn't really her sound, it was more of a foundation, a starting point, I could see it isn't what she really wanted. I know how that feels, it's hard to define your own sound right off the bat, we usually look to our influences, sample some stuff, do our own takes. It's how Gorillaz started out, and that was very much the case for Simz. Little Simz is an artist that personally speaks to a very niche generation, a generation growing up in the now that is lacking in rapping and writing on issues that come with figuring yourself out. It was just beautiful to see her blossom from this anxious creator to one of the most iconic influential women in the UK scene.

2D: I like her hats.

Little Simz: Garage Palace I guess for me it's almost like, I feel like I've always been someone to defy the odds, I've always gone against the grain, I've always done things a bit unorthodox and challenge things that haven't been challenged before, and I feel like in this song I was blessed enough to have the opportunity to express that in a little bit more depth, "Palace flows, rain falls from the heavens to my palace rooftop, when the light shines through it I feel more exposed" It's very out of body, out of sight, out of mind, conceptual wise, and more so I think the song is about reaching heights that haven't been reached before, is what I get from it, but everyone will listen to it and everyone will have their different interpretations, and that's the thing I love about art as well it's open for interpretation so what it means to me might not mean that to someone else or another listener, that's what so great about the record but then some people will listen to the record and not even think that deep into it because it just sounds like a hit or a club solo, or whatever the case, y'know what I mean? So it's like there's so many different layers to it I feel, It's wicked.

When it came time to record a visual for the track, the band were left at a loss.


GARAGE
PALACE

Russel: We were still not on speaking terms with Hewlett or Passion Pictures, and Murdoc had been thrown up in jail for a third, maybe fourth time now, so we hired an animation team to do animated versions of ourselves with Little Simz, and put us in this 8-bit arcade style type visual.

Noodle: We commissioned the people over at Blinkink to produce a visual accompaniment for the single. They are this world class animation team based in London, and work in blending modern technology with old school cinematic techniques, always focussing on the fundamentals of storytelling, character and emotion. I've personally wanted to always invest in a career in the animation field, If I wasn't doing Gorillaz that's probably what I would be doing, so I was so happy to get the chance to work in that field a bit with this visual. We worked closely with McKay Felt, who has always done illustrations for Little Simz, to put us in this dystopian rundown world, filled to the brim with zombies and ninjas.

2D: Yep…you can tell Noodle got her grubby hands all over this.

The visual starts with Little Simz, 2D, Murdoc (who has been animated in despite of his prison absence), Noodle, and Russel, each holding a weapon of their own, as they look upon a giant Buddah floating in the skies upon a neon tower, which is their destination in this video.

Russel: For a while we tried to hide Murdoc's incarceration publicly, we knew that kind of info would just be a media frenzy, which we didn't really need at the time. Though Ace being a part of the band would get out sooner or later…

Throughout the video words such as 'FIGHT', 'PRAY', and 'SPEAK' flash on screen, in the next scene we see the band in the middle of an urban setting, we see the band and Little Simz going up against a horde of zombies, some ninjas are doing tricks, one of which has cut his feet off.

2D: We probably couldn't get away with anything like that in real life, if 'Stylo' sunk our budget that badly, imagine what this would do. Having to convince actors to cut off their feet and all…

Following a battle against the living dead, the band begins to ascend in the sky, as they grow closer to the final destination, the big-

2D: Y'know things just get fuckin' weird at this point, just look at the screenshots, you'll get the picture. We face off that giant Budda thing and kick its arse.

Er…alright then…well that's another visual done with I suppose…

Russel: This visual turned out really well! Huge shout out to all the folks over at Blinkink.

October 31st 2017 *Garage Palace single and visual is released*

The Garage Palace single and visual were released worldwide on Halloween and Noodle's 27th birthday, The single reached #19 on the Dance/Electronic Digital Song Sales Chart and #37 on Hot Dance/Electronic Songs Chart. The visual was nominated for best dance video by UK MVA 2018.

November 3rd 2017 *Humanz Super Deluxe is released*

2D: Some of the early copies we sent out were signed, so that's well worth the 300 pounds you just dropped!

I'm surprised you can even read, let alone write.

2D: Well, I never said I signed them now, did I?

Chapter 11
Humanz in the Now Now

'Floated out into the woods
To hear the old elk call
Touched a rainbow with my hands
I'm dry, I got 'em all
"Ride on," said the king of cool
You've got nothing to lose
Tinseltown is down the road
It's the bullet of the noose'

The Brit Awards Rejuvenation

Fresh off the heels of their first two latin American live shows, Gorillaz returned to the UK once more for a two month hiatus of touring.

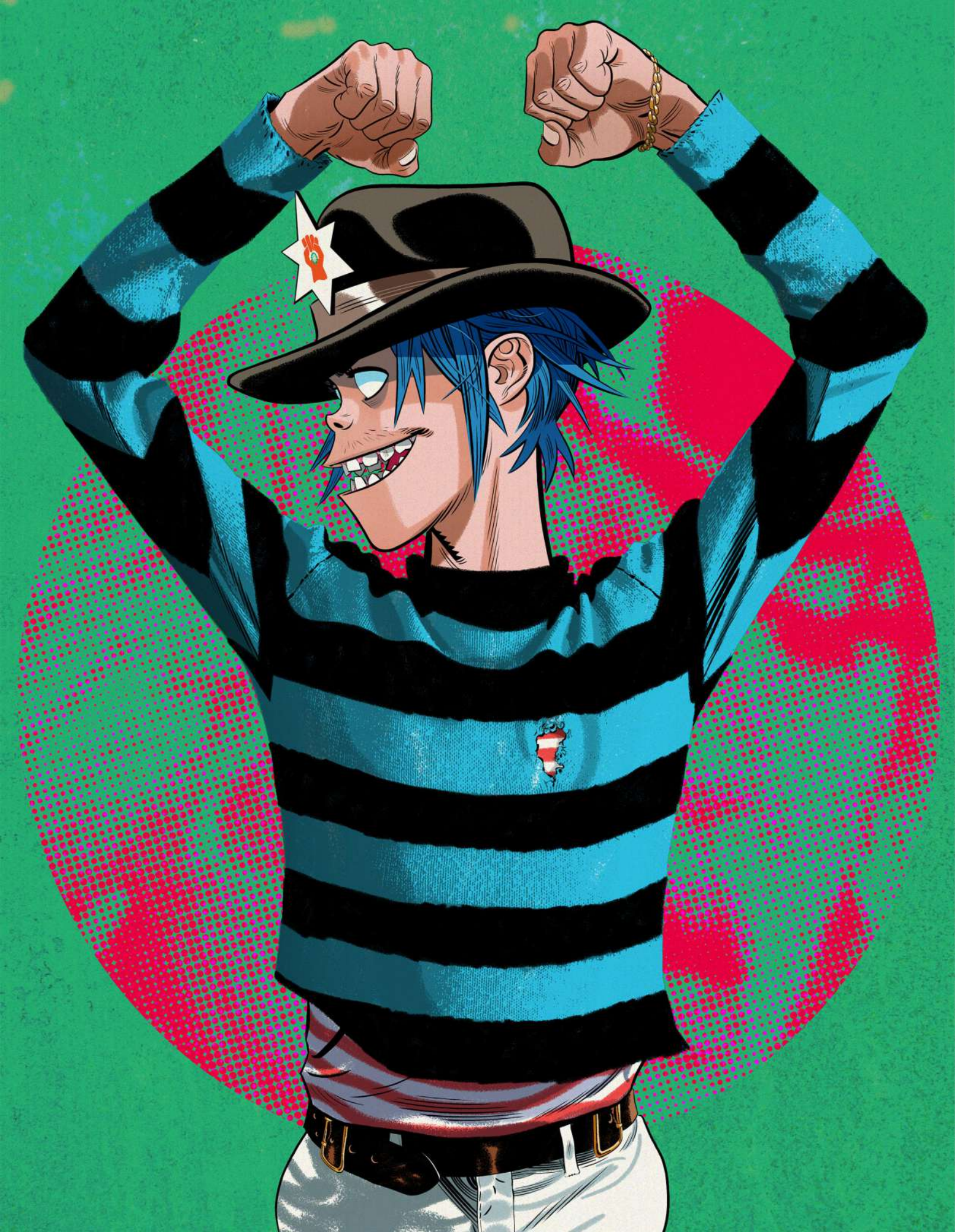
January 13th 2018 *Gorillaz are nominated for 'Best British Group' for the annual BRIT Awards*

Noodle: When we were nominated for the 2018 BRIT Awards, I can't lie, we were all a bit sceptical of the whole thing. We have been nominated for a BRIT Award for every single album we've done, and every single time we lost. We went into this not expecting anything at all, still, we showed up with our heads held high.

February 21st 2018 *Gorillaz attend the BRIT Awards*

Russel: We brought a few friends along with us to the ceremony, people who helped us throughout both the making and the promotion of this album. Damon, Jamie, Remi, Jenny Beth, DRAM, and Little Simz. We came to an agreement that if we did end up winning anything, we would let them go up and take it on our behalf, since we already have enough awards, and the whole thing was a team effort. Obviously, this didn't fly well with Murdoc at all, but he's not here so what's he gonna do?

2D: Speaking of, that old fossil was there with us, not in the literal sense, that would be crazy! He attended over video chat from Wormwood Scrubs. He was trying to get our attention the whole time, blabbering on and on about some El Mierda bloke, but we just put ourselves on mute and turned down his volume.



Russel: It was nice to see our good friend and collaborator, Rag N Bone Man, win an award for his single 'Human'. Always enjoy seeing our close friends and cohorts gaining success with their own music.

2D: We're only Humanz, after all. Don't put the blame on meee.

Russel: Shut up man.

When it came time to cover 'Best British Group', everyone eagerly sat in anticipation for the winners announcement, well, everyone except for Gorillaz of course. But when the name "GORILLLAZZZZ" was screamed directly into everyone's ear holes via thirty foot wide speakers, the trio jolted up in utter shock.

Russel: I can't believe we actually won the award, sixteen years of all nominees and no wins, and finally we secured one! Damon and the rest just looked at us, and we motioned them to go up on stage. I couldn't have a bigger smile on my face.

2D: The people who presented the awards were one of the Baldwins, can't remember which one, them lot are like rabbits, and Luke Evans.

Russel: He likes it fast and furious, or so I've heard…

However, the timing for the award acceptance couldn't have come worse, as Murdoc Niccals had used all his time up for a video chat, and had to be hoisted back to his cell. Murdoc did everything in his power to finish his speech, as the chat was streamed on the venue's big screen.

Murdoc: Sorry my bandmates can't be with me, I'm detained by your maj not the American maj your brit maj. Thanks to all the fab artists, management, Phil the Driver, Keith my zumba teacher, Sid the psycho Smith, my friend Hacksaw Harry, Jack the hat, Sirus the Virus, Big Balls McGuinness, no balls McGuinness… let me!-

After Murdoc's video feed was cut, the Gorillaz collaborators went on stage to accept the award. Beginning with Damon slamming the glass award on the podium.

2D: What the hell's he gone and done that for?

Damon: Thank you very much, erm…

ABOVE
The band at the Brits
"I'd like to accept this on behalf of no one but myself"
2D

BELOW
Murdoc's rushed acceptance speech

Damon leans onto the podium and tuts.

Russel: Here we go…

Damon: (drunkenly) I got one thing to s-say. And it's about this country. This country is…believe it or not quite a small little thing, right? But it's full of, it's a lovely place! And it's part of er…a beautiful world. But erm…what I want to say is…don't let it become isolated. Don't let yourselves become er…cut off, you know, ffff, considering our size we do incredible things in music, you know what I mean? We got a real spirit and a real soul and er, don't let politics get in the way of all that shit, right?

2D: Dear lord, why did we let them do this?

Russel: I don't know man! We were just trying to be nice!

2D: Well look where being nice has gotten us Russ!

Noodle: Maybe we should've told him to lay off the free bar…

Russel: What he said I stand by, I just wish he would've said it with a little more grace, know what I'm saying? Bit embarrassing, then when the other collaborators tried to talk, they kept cutting them off, it was painful to watch.

2D: In summary, I don't think we're being invited back to these, not with Damon anyway.

While we're here, Gorillaz were also nominated for several other awards throughout the year, including; GAFFA Award, Grammy, Q Award, UK Music Video Award, Electronic Music Award, and finally, Webby for E.ON Solar Collaboration. Gorillaz successfully took home the Q Award and their second Webby.

2D: I'm surprised we won a Webby for this over the Mixed Reality App Telekom had done for us, but like Murdoc said, none of this really matters in the end. Awards are like that poem Ozymandias, it's the music that counts, not the things they give you for making the music.

May 7th 2018 *Noodle is spotted at the Kentucky Derby with Ace*

Following various whispers around the web of Murdoc not being present for the bulk of the Humanz tour (thanks to some shoddy photoshop on management's end), Noodle was spotted at the annual Kentucky Derby in Louisville, United States. The photo was taken by recently fired and rehired director and stylist, Jamie Hewlett, after visiting to watch his favourite horse, Richard, be brutally executed after coming in last place. It appeared that Murdoc's plan had been a resounding success, perhaps too much so, as further rumours began circulating that the pair were romantically intertwined. Although later, this was proven false by Noodle, stating on her Instagram that-

Noodle: We're not dating, Just good friends!

Murdoc: Yeah (sighs), I don't really have anyone other than myself to blame for that now, do I? Ace kept his word, called and texted almost every day, he was a bit overbearing actually. Eventually I just stopped replying, lost my weight in the decision making for the album. 2D's in charge now, apparently.

Murdoc: Strewth. And Noodle and Russ are totally fine with it weirdly. Normally I would kick off about all this, but what's the point of me even having any input if I'm not gonna get any of the credit? Figured I'd just leave 'em to it, see how it all pans out. They're big enough to look after themselves now anyway, I suppose.

2D: We were in a really good place, the awards were coming in, Murdoc was coming out in the showers (snickers), and the tour was going great. What's not to love?

Noodle: There is no 'good place' for Gorillaz, we are always between places, never staying still. For now, Murdoc is in a place with lots of bars and locks. Russel is trying to put the world back together. 2D is… well, in a new place. Less fragile, somehow, stronger. It's weird but Gorillaz is in me, part of me wherever I go. It is a way of being. A feeling, a rebellion maybe, that will not be controlled or do what is expected. I still don't know if I enjoy it anymore, but I can't escape it either. But right now, It seems too many people are breaking off and going alone. The world is splintering like a melting iceberg. So maybe now is the time to stay together, even if it means putting up with 2D's tedious demands.

2D: Sod off! You put up with Murdoc for long enough, I've earned the right to be this way.

Russel: 2D's just evolving. Like the world right now. We're in a storm, pulling us in all directions. And in the dark of a storm, you need a lighthouse to guide you out. 2D is that lighthouse.

2D lets out an annoyingly loud and long belch.

Things I like with Russel Hobbs

Riding the highs of success for a third time, Russel assembled his own podcast on Deezer originals to help pass the time on some of the more boring afternoons while travelling for the Humanz tour.

Russel: Well I got so much time on my hands, rehearsals, soundchecks, travelling. A gig only lasts a couple hours maximum. Then what? Figured I'd round up some of our collaborators who we got on the record, helped get the fans to understand what they're all about a little better.

May 2nd 2018 *Episode 1 & 2 of Things I Like is released*

Russel: I wanted to start off strong, got Posdnous from De La Soul in the room for this first one, we discussed what advice he'd give to his younger self, with the hindsight he had right there, right then.

Pos began by explaining how he and Gorillaz first came into contact, followed by reflecting on his almost thirty years with De La Soul, starting with girls, moving onto publishing, recording, touring, fashion, and finally family.

Russel: With Jenny I wanted to get a bit more out there, came up with the concept of a dinner party in the afterlife, who would be there and why? How did they influence you? Would anyone cause any trouble? And most importantly, where's my invite?

Russel began by asking Jenny to introduce herself and explain what exactly she's all about and where she's from. Jenny then moved on to explain that she wouldn't want to host an afterlife dinner party alone, it would have to be with Pop Noir founder and longtime collaborator of Jenny's and partner as of 2006, Johnny Hostile.

May 9th 2018 *Episode 3 of Things I Like is released*

Russel: Now this one was a lot of fun, I brought on my boy Peven Everett, and we were in L.A. at the time, and if you know anything about L.A. then you know exactly what we were up to thanks to another podcaster who happened to be in the area who hooked us up. Now I don't know what most people talk about when they find themselves in that position, food probably, but for me? I always be contemplating extraterrestrial life.

Peven began by explaining how he was brought into the Gorillaz fold, his love for skateboarding in his younger years, records he'd listen to in his youth, which coincidentally all had some form of involvement from Damon Albarn, his experience coming into the studio with Gorillaz in Chicago through Twilite Tone, his beliefs of alien life amongst humans, philosophy, science, and spirituality.

May 16th 2018 *Episode 4 of Things I Like is released*

Russel: Little Simz, I've already been incredibly vocal about how much I love and respect this woman. But we've already spoken about her work on Garage Palace, so this time round I figured we could chat about her new album of the time, Stillness in Wonderland, this weird trippy psychedelic experience, getting lost in a whirlwind of self discovered and hazy afternoon thoughts in the back of your head, with an Alice in Wonderland twist. A real treat for any G fan I assure you. Especially that comic book that came with it, man she be talking my language.

Simz begins by explaining how she came into contact with Gorillaz, her experiences on Garage Palace, the consistent symbolism of Alice in Wonderland in her work and throughout her life, sides of her which are yet to be shown off publicly through her work, and her favourite comic book.

Russel: She's a big Marvel fangirl, I dig that, used to read a lot of that stuff in my twenties too.

May 23rd 2018 *Episode 5 of Things I like is released*

Russel: We got a lot of kids who read through and listen to our stuff, so I felt this one was important, Pauline Black was big back in 79' onwards for things like The Selecter, which were huge in the Ska scene from 77' all the way to present day. Get the kids involved man, know what I'm sayin'?

Pauline begins by explaining the era in which she came from, trying to form a Reggae band with Silverton Hutchinson (The Specials original drummer before John Bradbury), going on tour with The Specials and Madness on the 2-Tone tour, what inspired the track 'On My Radio', dealing with right-wing skinheads at live shows, how she tackled being a black female lead of a multicultural band in the 80s, how she felt towards the clash and the punk scene as a whole, and working in the NHS prior to being a musician.

Russel: This was definitely the most insightful of the bunch, much respect to you Pauline, I hope to work with you some more in the future.

May 30th 2018 *Episode 6 & 7 of Things I like is released*

Russel: Cheick is a wonderful man, and musically speaking, it seems like he's always got several plates spinning at once on his tracks, you know what I'm saying? His 2008 album 'Sabaly' is a personal favourite of mine, usually stick it on while I'm hitting the road, with all the different sounds he got going on in there it's a lot like musical chemistry, add a bit of this, loop that, up a notch, down a notch on the vocals to coincide. Just beautiful man.

Russel invited Malian musical mastermind Cheick Tidiane Seck to explore meeting Fela Kuti, the origins of the Rail Band and the power of African music.

Russel: And finally we have Gabriel Wallace, one of our live band drummers.

Russel and his earthly representative Gabriel pull up their drum stools and sit down to discuss the art of drumming.

Russel: This podcast didn't take off the way we expected it to which is why it ended so abruptly, but for what it's worth I think it's a fantastic insight into the psyche of the Humanz family, and if you're a fan of the record it's a must listen.

DEEZER

The Recording of 'The Now Now'

Following Murdoc's incarceration. During the second Humanz North American leg, 2D began etching away at the foundation of their sixth studio album, now known simply as 'The Now Now'.

2D: I just woke up and felt this energy inside me, like I'm a meteor from outer space exploding into a million bits in the Earth's atmosphere and sprinkling down my funky space juice onto all of humanity. (Russel told me to say that last bit and I might have got it wrong). I really like the idea of making new music and playing it live almost simultaneously. What I am doing here is a lot like what I did on the Plastic Beach tour with 'The Fall'. Except this will be a more complete record than that, but hopefully have that spontaneity. If we're going to do more with Gorillaz we don't want to wait seven years because, y'know, we're getting on a bit now.

Noodle: Speak for yourself…

It seems as though for this record you are the one taking the charge.

2D: Yeah! I couldn't really take centre stage much with 'The Fall' for various reasons. Murdoc, the budget, and that live band we had… But here I am, manning the wheel.

Russel: Hopefully we don't crash.

2D: I'm calling the shots now. Like this morning, I said to Noodle, "Hey, fetch me my jacket will ya?" And she said "piss off!". But in the past, she would have totally ignored me. Which means people are starting to listen to me. I'm levelling up. 2D is becoming 3D. You feel me? As they say, some people are born great, and some have greatness thrust inside them. I'm the second one. I certainly wasn't a born leader. Before I was a baby. Weak, puny, no one really took me seriously. But I've grown up a lot lately, and people are starting to listen. I am the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the... Amiga. Omega 3? O-Megadrive?

Russel: Omega.

2D: I'm talking, Russ.

Russel sits back into his chair and sighs, he's already had to deal with this new '2D' for a few months now, and he's just about sick of the act.

2D: I feel good. Sharp, like a pebble. But one that's been sharpened. I'm focused, I know what I have to do now. The world is in trouble, bad stuff is happening. For example...

2D starts clicking his fingers loudly, once every second.

ABOVE
"Idaho, Idaho..."
2D

2D: Did you know that every time I click my fingers, a chicken dies? Yeah, I know, it's messed up. So what I do, and what we can all do-is stop clicking our fingers. Save some chickens. We all got the power. You feel me?

Oh…er…yeah, I feel you…

Russel: Hey D, can you feel this?

2D: ARG!

Russel smacks the back of 2D's head. Noodle chuckles a bit to herself. 2D, however, seems to not find this exchange funny at all. As his eyes turn from a milky white to void black, a present scowl is freshly slapped onto his gormless face.

2D: This is exactly what I am talking about! I'm not gonna sit here and take this.

Russel: Settle down D. It was just a joke

2D: A joke? Is that what you call a joke? How is this for a joke, you'd be out of a job if it wasn't for me, probably wallowing in sum' nutters basement over something that happened over a decade ago.

Noodle: Ok, that's enough!

2D: Naw, you stay out of this, I'm sick of you lot treating me like a sc-like a scape…what's it?

Scapegoat?

2D: Yeah!

Russel: D, I'm sorry man I was only foolin' around.

2D: Get lost you prick.

Russel: Alright, I've been pretty laid back about you acting like a big shot, but you better watch your mouth before-

Noodle: Knock it off! Both of you!

2D: Before what? You gonna hit me again? You think I'm not used to it by this point?

Noodle: ENOUGH!!!

…

Russel: Man, fuck this.

2D turns back around as Russel makes his way out of the room, visibly stunned by the events which just unfolded sporadically. Normally one of 2D's outbursts would be met with a stern fisting, although surprisingly, Russel has shown serious restraint.

Noodle: You're turning into a real piece of work, you know that?

Noodle slams her chair onto the floor and chases after Russel.

2D turns to me.

2D: (Ahem) Er… Anyhow…

You okay?

2D: Yeah, I think so. He had it comin'.

Right…can I ask, what's with the er…eyes…thing.

2D: Eh? Oh, you mean the colour? Depends on me mood.

Really?

2D: (snickers) Yeah, why not?

Okay then?

2D: Gorillaz in America is very rewarding. It just is. It's been very productive, extremely productive. Very hard working, very rewarding. I try and use whatever place I'm at as an interface — an emotional interface, and at the moment, that's Gorillaz, and in the moment, that seems to be endlessly in America. It's just – ahh, I can't think about anything else when I'm here, and I start to understand sometimes some of its seemingly internal belligerence, when the boat goes a certain way, because it's truly like that for so many people here.

2D: I'm speaking from a moment of revelation about the psyche of America. That is something I could never understand, and now I understand it a lot more. I don't know if that helps anyone… What I am trying to say is the actual essence of making music doesn't change from one project to another. It's just the environment I choose to put myself in that changes dramatically. There's only one way to make music and that's to channel yourself into it. It exists anyway.

What are some of the locations you took the record?

2D: Uh… Arizona, L.A. Hollywood, Kansas, Idaho, Florida…so as you can tell it's a mostly American record…we did do one set of recording sessions in Zürich, the only European side of it… My favourite place to record was Idaho. I really fell in love with Idaho. We ended up at, apparently, Bruce Willis' ski lodge. But he wasn't there, and I thought, "That's a weird connection I've just made with Bruce Willis, considering he once almost shot my brains out."

Living that potato life I see

2D: I don't understand that potato reference.

They, like, make a lot of them.

2D: But it's all mountains. It's all fucking mountains. You can't grow potatoes in mountains. It sounds like a stupid idea to me. I can see the silver in Idaho. There was a massive silver rush. I can imagine that, but not the potatoes. I don't want to sing about potato fucking farms. I'm just saying. I don't want to sing about potatoes. I want to sing about silver mines.

Noodle and Russel return from whatever hallway they just went out too, an amalgamation of thoughts seem to be clouding their minds, nothing good, and nothing new it seems either.
I'm a bit surprised you're already working on another album so soon after 'Humanz'.

2D: You're surprised? Murdoc's not in charge anymore blud, it's a different playing field. Normally after a big release you feel empty for a long time. But this time I filled up again quickly, like a toilet cistern. Humanz seemed to get a lot of bad rep amongst the fans. So consider this to be an apology for the absolute tra-inwreck that was our last record.

ABOVE
Early concept for "3D" album art
"Not the Massive Attack twat"
2D

Russel slams his fists onto the table, knocking over several beverages in the process.

Russel: Alright listen!-

Noodle: -Eventually, later down the line, after 2D had recorded some demos. We returned back to Damon's Studio 13 to touch up on the demos he had recorded on the road. This is really where a lot of the groundwork for the album was made. What made it go from an iPad tour diary to a genuine studio record.

2D: Yeah, Damon helped us with the record, as always…he never leaves us alone. He brought his pal, Remi Kabaka too. He helped us with the last record. I don't think he's going to be leaving us alone anytime soon either. Like we've done with most albums, we decided to get a producer in to help out with the record. James Ford. He's a part of Simian Mobile Disco and the Last Shadow Puppets. He's also done production work with the Arctic Monkeys, Foals, Florence and the Machine, Depeche Mode, Haim, Klaxons, Jessie Ware and Kylie Minogue.

Noodle: I like James Ford. I think he might have a thing for bands with animals in their names. Maybe he should rename his band to Non-Hominid Simian Mobile Disco?

So what collaborator artists do you have coming this time round, if any?

2D: What's with all these questions?

Russel: It's an interview.

2D: I hear you. One of the big problems about 'Humanz' is there really wasn't enough of me on there. Way too many artists, and the fans seemed to agree. And with this being an apology album and all…also because Murdoc's got the book with all our famous friends' email addresses, and he's in prison. I WhatsApp'd him to ask for it, then realised he probably isn't allowed a phone. So, I sent him a cake with a phone hidden in it, but I forgot to hide the phone in it.

Russel: Well, it was mostly because we only had five weeks to complete the record in London. We didn't have time to reach out to many people, so we had to try and settle for who could come out to us in such quick timing.

2D: But mostly axing the idea of collaborators was my idea… All my decisions are conscious, even when I'm asleep. That's how woke I am.

The small yet still seemingly massive roster on this Gorillaz record consisted of George Benson, Snoop Dogg, Jamie Principle, Junior Dan, Abra, and Graham Coxon.

Noodle: Most of these guys are old friends, Jamie and Graham both showed up on the last album.

Noodle: Snoop Dogg was on Plastic Beach, and Junior Dan all the way back on our self titled
debut. It was nice seeing all these old faces again.

Russel: George Benson and Abra were new faces though. I remember back in my childhood, my parents would always host these fancy parties at our house. The song that I would always hear coming on was George Benson's 'Give Me The Night'. It's a song I would sometimes sneak into any parties we would host. It's a shame we couldn't get George for our party album, but I am glad we got him for this one. Then we also got Abra…I actually don't recall how she got in the studio to be completely honest.

2D: I think she just came out of the loo, I don't know how long she had been in there, and
she just came out, did her vocals and left, so bizarre.

How did a big name like Snoop Dogg get involved with you lot again?

Russel: We kinda just ran into him on tour.

2D: Hang on, Russ, let me tell this anecdote. Yeah, so, what happened was, we kinda just ran into him on tour. He's a fan of my work, and we're now super close showbiz buddies. We even have our own secret handshake. I hold my hand up like I'm going in for a high five, and he punches me. We're tight.

Russel: Then we just got Jamie Principle to add onto the track. We were already touring with
him around that time so it was pretty simple to get him on board.

2D: I loved seeing Junior Dan again. He was supposed to be the replacement bassist for Murdoc before Ace came in. We ultimately decided to make it up to him by getting him on bass for 'Sorcererz'. He had a good vibe going on with Ace. Meanwhile, Noodle was jamming it out on guitar with her little boyfriend, Graham Coxon. I really hope Damon stops getting his Blur mates on our stuff, he should just make another album with them if he wants to work with them!

And already with that, like a flash of lighting, another Gorillaz album was complete…so at the
end of the day, what does 'The Now Now' really mean?

2D: It's about being far away, now... After Humanz, we partied hard. Too hard. I went all the way to the edge of the universe and back. Time moves faster these days, we had to react quickly. 'Cos if we didn't, now very soon becomes then, and we'd have to call the album Now Then. Which isn't so immediate. Although it could make a good B-side compilation. Russ, make a note of that.

Russel: Gorillaz are about the now. You know? As Picasso once uttered, "if you know exactly what you're going to do, what's the good in doing it?"

2D: True dat. That's why I never fill in my diary. Don't plan anything, stay free…but also because Ace sorta sold my diary to the record label, and that had all my shit in it…so…anyone got a spare sheet of paper?

ABOVE
Russ getting Snoop on board for The Now Now

Noodle: I can feel a connection with the fans on 'The Now Now'. We are connecting on a higher level. In another world.

2D: Expect greatness, and you will not be disappointed. A wise man said that. Me. Yeah. I know that doesn't sound very humble, but there's nothing usual about The Now Now. If anything, it's non-usual.

Russel: He doesn't even use autotune this time. Gloves are off.

2D ponders on a final thought for the overall album.

2D: Life on the road is about getting to know yourself. This is really important you know – and fucking hell. I knew I was going to have some kind of mid-life crisis this year. I knew I would, and I have had aspects of midlife crises, but I've also learned a lot about myself, for good and for bad.

February 2018 *The Now Now mastered by John Davis at Metropolis Mastering, London.*

2D: Alright! Enough! Here we go! It's time for my song by song!
YEAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH, IT'LL BE FUN!

The Now Now Song by Song

HUMILITY

The first track of the record, as well as the leading single. Humility introduces the record with a nice breezy tune that perfectly captures that nostalgic summer feeling.

Noodle: This track is just so bouncy. It's really like you're having some sort of dream trip in summer. There's this introspective, cool feeling all throughout the song.

2D: It was always called 'Humility' since I wrote it. It has always been that tune. It has developed a little bit but basically it's the same. I don't think that the melody or the lyrics are necessarily connected to that word 'Humility'. But they are informed by that word.

Russel: Without a doubt this is really the only 'feel good' track off the whole album. It just gets slower from here on out.

Noodle: George Benson plays guitar on this, it was really fun to jam out with him, and mesh our guitars on the track together. In the studio, George and I did a call and response with our guitars. In the final version both of our takes were mixed.

2D: I wanted the first song to give off that sweet calm vibe, to sorta, encapsulate that freedom to not be with someone toxic, and how refreshing that freedom can be. It takes you to a world that lets you escape from everything that overwhelms you. That you can start being a better person without the need for anyone specifically. There are no more walls that block my thoughts.

Russel: Right, because you have definitely been a better person as of late.

Noodle: My favourite part of the song has to be the "If I pick it up when I know that it's broken
Do I put it back? Or do I head out onto the lonesome trail. And let you go" 2D's vocals and the instrumentation just slowly building and building before you're fully submerged in synths and keyboards. From the get go, you can tell this is a 2D record.

2D: This track, and to an extent this whole album, is a last end of career attempt to revive my career.

TRANZ

The second track, and final proper single from the album immediately whisks the listener away from that clean and free aesthetic in the last track, and immediately into this sinister drug induced spiral.

2D: To start off…I should maybe mention that during the recording of this, I got back into some…previous habits. They're pretty much what fueled some of the creative thinking I had, especially with this track.

Noodle: This was probably one of the most exhilarating tracks we've ever done in our discography. There's just so much happening at once and it's terrifying in a sense.

2D: This one's a bit on the nose. I wrote it at two in the morning on a Saturday night. I was on this great high, and all of the sudden I had this epiphany, which spawned all these ideas. I raced to my room, grabbed a pen and paper and just started scribbling away. Just writing and writing, like a total lunatic. At one point I ran out of ink and had to use my knife to write lyrics onto the walls. When I awoke in the morning, I found that I must've been on something that really messed with my brain, because I found, scrawled in blood, over and over again. "Do you look like me, do you feel like me, do you burn like me, do you dance like me." I didn't realise it then, but I think what was happening was a trance. Hence the title. I was opening a third eye, a gateway into my mind. What perishes can be reborn from its ashes. This specific night was the slimy birth of a new 2D.

Noodle: Why did you have to describe it like that?

2D: Sorry luv, I just had to set the record straight. I keep seeing all these kids online who think the song is about me wanking off. Which is NOT TRUE! So stop saying it is!

Noodle: Please. Never. Call me that. Again.

Russel: If this album is 2D's own personal diary. This track really sometimes makes me question what's going on in the poor kids head, if anything. This whole epiphany he had, this birth of a new 2D…all this talk made me feel uneasy, we all strived through and believed this new 2D was for the better…but is it really? Is the guy in trouble?

2D: Russ…

Russel: Yeah man?

2D:...Shut up.

HOLLYWOOD

The third track on the album, the only song to feature vocal guest artists, these being veteran Gorillaz collaborator, Snoop Dogg and newcomer from Humanz, Jamie Principle. Continuing the party atmosphere from the previous track, we see the "new" 2D soaking up the Hollywood lifestyle.

2D: This is one of the songs I wrote during the tour. I think we stayed a night or two in West Hollywood during the Humanz Tour, and that's where I came up with the idea of this track.

Russel: This is a pretty collaborative song. You have 2D speaking the main idea of the track during the main chorus through his simple 'Hollywood is alright'. While Jamie and Snoop follow up with their own takes with their own ideas. The percussion on this one got pretty heavy, so we brought in Gorillaz live drummer, Karl Vanden Bossche, to help us out.

2D: I learned a thing or two during my stay in Hollywood. You have to make lots of ludicrous sacrifices to achieve fame. You have to give up a lot for something seductive, and yet corrupting. Hollywood is just really enticing to me, always has been. It manages to be heaven and hell at the same time. One moment you are famous but the next will depend on what others decide.

Noodle: I remember way back when, when we tried getting the Gorillaz film project off the ground, little 11 year old me was excited to go to Hollywood, to meet all these talented creative entities, interesting and inspiring people. When I got the chance to do this I slowly discovered something rotten… With Hollywood, I think it really sums up that famous Shakesphere quote "All that glitters is not gold". There's all these luxuries and beauty, but what's really behind all that beauty?...something ugly and repulsing.

2D: I like Snoop's bit, his whole idea that Hollywood has this ability to transform an individual into doing many powerful things, but how likely is it that same individual is the powerful individual themselves from the beginning. Kind of ironic since I think Hollywood life has consumed Snoop the most out of any of us.

KANSAS

Next on, 'Kansas' we get our first melancholic tune of the record, a song about refusing to cry or to show any emotion. Is that good enough?

2D: Yeah 'Kansas'... I guess I was starting to feel a bit homesick here. I had spent almost all of the Humanz campaign in America, I think I was starting to miss the green hills of England. I wrote this song and recorded its demo in our hotel room in Kansas City. Before I started writing anything, 'The Wizard Of Oz' was playing on our TV in the room. Dorothy's whole experience in that film I decided to use as a basis for my own experience with being in a foreign place, and longing to go back home. A place where you don't know where you are but it gives you something.

Russel: Ace's bass is very heavy on this one, each of his bass lines I think heavily recuperate 2D's feelings and mindset throughout the song.

2D: There was a certain person who I knew for a while who always buried his emotions deep down, always jumped to the next thing, never took a moment to ponder or reflect. It's something I suppose I picked up from him because I did it with my own feelings about missing home.

Noodle: Probably not the best thing to do. Storing up all that emotion and anguish just causes you to burn out like a candle, and that burn out flows out to your loved ones. Don't hide your feelings, it's bad to keep them and never let them go. I mean you of all people taught me that…

2D: Yeah… Righto next song! I can't wait to see what crazy hijinks will ensue with our good ol' pal Junior Dan The Manly Man.

SORCERERZ

The fifth song of the record features an old accomplice of Gorillaz, flashing you back to a previous moment of the band's history, where it all began.

2D: This song I think really summed up what I said earlier about this album being an apology for Humanz. I remember the entire political climate during the recording of that album being exhausting, and it taught me a bit on how I should consume media and news in today's world. The news isn't going to determine how I interpret life, I just have to experience it for myself.

Russel: I agree with you D, it's a smart decision to remain calm during the dark times. Each of us should have our own separate point of view.

2D: Er yeah, well you're one to talk Russ, being that you freak out over anything you see on the news, you'll wet yourself if you see a senator step on a beetle.

Noodle: It was really nice to see Junior Dan again for the recording on this one, and ABRA's backing vocals harmonising with 2D's really helped bring this hallucinogenic touch to it all.

2D: What did you think of the song Ace?

Ace: Ace!

2D: Brilliant.

IDAHO

2D: This was one of the early sketchings I wrote for the record, so you can tell lyrically, it's one of the least fleshed out songs. It reminds me a lot of 'The Fall', we were staying in this ski lodge and I just looked out and wrote about what I saw and how I felt, I used that song writing technique a lot with 'The Fall', and it's something I still do every now and then, but I think I've gotten better at it.

Noodle: I think the strongest aspect of this song is definitely my guitar, nothing beats that classic acoustic sound from a guitar, and that sound definitely was needed for a song like this.

2D: I wasn't in a good headspace when I wrote this one so I tried to find my happy place, and through the silver linings of Idaho, I was able to find that happy place, a simple place away from tour buses and Chick Fil A's… Life sometimes is an endless cycle, it becomes so monotonous, it's boring.

Russel: You can stop clicking your fingers now, D.

LAKE ZURICH

This song serves as a bridge for the album, an instrumental romp taking you through a busy night in the city of Zurich.

2D: This song is, in a way, the spiritual successor to our track 'Double Bass' off our first album, it's just me translating my thoughts into music, and all I was thinking about was Zurich, this gigantic city in Switzerland, and through that the sounds of Zurich came out of my brain and into GarageBand. Both figuratively and literally, I think you can hear some ambulances and cars speeding past in the track. We even had Damon Albarn do some spoken vocals during the middle of the song. He talks a bit about our conjoined frustrations on how the album 'Humanz' turned out, and how we're trying to bring light through 'The Now Now' to try and appease the fans.

Russel: Actually, I think that part of the song is about how ridiculous it is to be building a bridge from Zurich to New York, and how despite its ridiculousness, it's a vision that wants to be spread around the world. So in the end, using that bridge allegory, today's world can be an indifferent and at times scary place to share and communicate ideas because of the public's perception of the media. People today don't appreciate everything around us because now everything is going very fast.

2D: You can live in denial all you want Russ, but you know it's true.

MAGIC CITY

Ah…'Magic City'. A great and magical track, infectious in the sounds that are energetically cheerful, with an elegant melody, which makes the instruments stand out.

Noodle: Oh, yes this one is a favourite of mine. 2D's vocals and the instrumentals just coexist harmoniously here with each other. This one gives off a dignified and wonderful feeling. I got the opportunity to once more play with Graham Coxon on this one. He's all over Gorillaz these days, couldn't say the same thing back then though…

2D: I wrote this one while we were in Miami. I recall waking up at around 6 in the morning, the sun was just rising, we had to go to the airport in a little bit for our last American gig of the Humanz tour in Austin, Texas. And I just remember looking out our hotel window, and I could see the entire city of Miami. It just made me think, actually had me thinking properly for the first time in a while. I was thinking not only about Miami, but also about myself. I was thinking about my future…and I just felt really lost, and when I say lost I don't mean the usual, "what happened to my eggs" lost, I mean, so lost you don't even know your purpose in the world, feeling so lost in such a big place. I'd never experienced that before until then. I shouldn't be thinking about my future, usually Russel warns me not to. He's right, the future is usually something that you just have to let flow.

Russel: If you think too much about your fate, it really is just gonna end up being a catastrophe.

Noodle: Miami can be such a magical city, but it has its thorns and adversities. Said negative feelings I think is what really was able to break 2D's newfound core.

2D: I think it dawned on me here that my body is ageing, but my emotions and maturity still really haven't. I'm starting to long for and reflect on those years when I was younger. I was such a different person then…and now I've turned into somebody completely different. When I started to question my purpose in the world, that led me to questioning my relationships…

FIRE FLIES

‘Fire Flies’ embarks the listener on an extremely emotional roller coaster that lets you fall into the abyss.

Noodle: This song is really sincere, intimately detailing the agitation and difficult thoughts that someone can feel when they’re slowly drifting in or out of a toxic relationship.

Russel: This one has to be my favourite, just because of how much raw emotion was put into it. We see 2D at his lowest point, feeling defeat and loneliness which is communicated through oppressed soft sounds and introspective contemplative voices.

2D: Yeah no wonder it’s your favourite.

Russel: Come on man, you know I didn’t mean it like that.

2D: At this point of writing the record I had this feeling of being trapped, having problems dealing with pain and suffering. All my fears and insecurities inside me were just piling up, the more they piled the more I felt they were just slowly consuming my kindest side. And as that faded away so did the love for the people I care about. Despite all this, there are sometimes these Fire Flies, small glimpses of hope in eternal darkness and anxiety.

2D rubs his face slowly a bit, before looking at me, with his white tired and baggy eyes.

2D: I guess I blame myself for not doing things right with some people…

ONE PERCENT

On the second-to-last track of the album, we have a calm and captivating melody, easy to process for the ear. The song is short yet very sweet.

2D: This song continues that feeling of eternal emptiness, loneliness and isolation from 'Fire Flies'. It transmits this ambience of just awakening in an empty city early in the morning after a long night of partying. But you're alone, there is no one there to comfort you.

Noodle: This song is pretty short, but with how many instruments we used it makes it feel longer.

2D: In this track, I am calling out to all worlds and every person or thing that is willing to listen to my message, everyone is receiving you now…

Russel: The lyrics are quite cryptic and difficult to wrap your head around, and depending on the listener, you can hear it from a different point of view. Personally I don't think this one really fits on the album.

2D: We're not getting into this argument again Russ so just shut it.

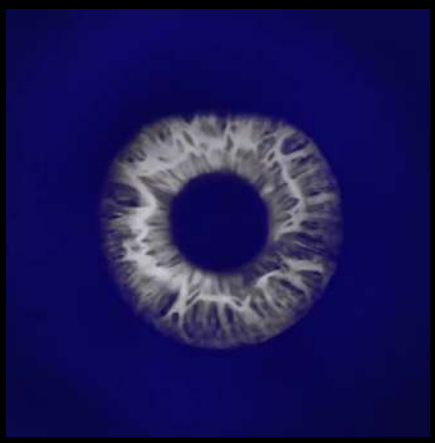
Noodle: I think the song is about the world being bombarded with so much information that now the standards are so high that they leave you empty inside.

2D: It's not about that actually.

Noodle: Then what's it about?

2D:...I'm not telling.

SOUK EYE



The final track of the record, and a favourite amongst the fans. 'Souk Eye' deals with love for another through heartfelt lyrics and stunning instrumentals. Starts off simple but from one moment to the next, transforms into a great blast of euphoria.

2D: Everything from the beginning of the album all leads us to this. A tearful yet confusing and overwhelming goodbye with someone you've known for a while. That someone in a sense was myself. My old self, my youth. The one that everyone took advantage of, the one everyone belittled and put down constantly. The one that was so naive to the world. This new 2D that was born is giving an extremely intimate farewell to the old one as we leave LA and head back home. The song is usually interpreted as being a romantic one, but I don't see it like that at all. It means something more to me. It means giving up someone that you'll never ever see again. That will fade away into nothing.

Russel: This is the most emotionally vulnerable we see 2D in the album, and probably the most emotionally vulnerable I have seen him in quite some time.

2D: Recently I think I have been better off without this person, but a part of me, no matter how small, still misses that presence. That old 2D. The part of my life that's over and done with, and will never get back. One part loves him but another part hates him because he doesn't get out of my head, when I just want to be at peace with myself and others.

Noodle: So you're finally accepting your…mortality in a sense. Realising that years are passing and nothing will change that so you have to let go of the past and look towards the future, no matter what's there.

2D: Yeah…this song, the album. It's all been an inner quest, an inner journey that is to heal wounds and start as a new you. Not nailing yourself with the past.

Noodle: That's very mature of you 2D…this is what you needed all along. This is what can help steer you in a better direction.

2D: Yeah. Cos this new 2D's way better! He gets what he wants! He knows what he wants! And he wants a cigar! Russ, go get me some.

Russel: Well…the pieces and thoughts are there…he just needs to link them somehow.

Humility: Opium on Rollerskates

Once 2D's album was finished mastering and ready to be released, Gorillaz prepared to record a new promo video for their leading single, 'Humility'.

2D: We already established that I wanted this to be a more proper record than 'The Fall'. One of the best ways I think of doing this was recording actual music videos for the album rather than shitty picture collages.

Russel: The idea in this video is 2D with headphones, lost in music, a little naive about the world. People are having a picnic with kids next to homeless people, a guy shooting up… The idea is that it's time for a people's poet, a new hero, to motivate the young generation. And 2D becomes this.

Noodle: We were fortunate enough to be able to get Jamie Hewlett back on board for directing this video. He had a lot of problems with our bassist Murdoc, but he's gone now. So he's back directing for us which is a miracle. Jamie brought on a few co-directors for this video, Tim McCourt, Max Taylor, and Evan Silver. Tim and Max came from this animation company we teamed up with on this video, they're called The Line. Who have a deep love and passion for animation, which is, let's face it, a necessity for Gorillaz projects. Evan came from this LA production company called Ruffian, he helped a lot with the live action parts of the video. We also got another company, Trace VFX, who helped with rotoscoping. And the company, Blinkink, who helped us previously with 'Garage Palace'.

Russel: So as you can tell, this video was going to be tall order. A bunch of different companies and people all coming together. I suppose since money is tight these days, we couldn't just get this big company like Passion to do our videos. A better solution to this was hiring different small in-house companies to help with our videos. Saves money, so we can do more videos.

2D: Didn't know you needed this many people to just record me roller skating around in my shorts.

The Humility music video was filmed in Venice Beach, Los Angeles, and featured America's favourite big kung fu fighting shaggy bearded weirdo, the one and only Jack Black.

Noodle: 'School Of Rock' was one of my favourite films as a kid. I always imagined myself as one of those kids in the film, and a certain someone as Jack Black's character. I was taken in at a young age and taught the ways of rock'n'roll. So that always stuck with me.

2D: Murdoc hates Jack Black. Almost strangled me to death over it once for suggesting that Jack would be a good choice to play him in a film. Well Murdoc wasn't around for this shoot obviously, so it seemed like the perfect opportunity to bring him into the fold. Bet that got him proper riled up.

Don't you think that's a little shallow?

ABOVE
"These guys are dorks"
NOODLE

2D: Well that was the moment I realised he wasn't my friend, the moment I woke up and saw that monster for who he is. It wasn't a playful joke between mates, never was. Years of tolerating him believing he's looking out for my best interest. He deserves far worse than what sentence he's got. Be the electric chair if it was up to me. Good riddance.

Russel: 2D idolised Murdoc for years, always looked up to him, I suppose this is his revenge. I don't care for revenge but it ain't my business, I just program the drums.

Noodle: If he keeps this up he'll become a far worse monster…

The video opens with 2D skating around Venice Beach, as he skates past various bystanders. Before passing by Jack Black, who is jamming on guitar and having a picnic by himself. Black gets up and begins to follow 2D around LA.

2D: Jack! Top bloke! Incredible actor. He's mimicking the exact notes of George Benson. Two legends from different eras, coming together as one. It's what Gorillaz do. I mean would it have made sense to actually have George Benson in the video? Maybe. But he's old. And we already have a mural for him in the video, so it all works out.

As 2D continues skating, he comes across a fellow roller skater, who is having a bit of trouble. 2D reaches out his hand, offering help, before the skater rejects his offer. 2D skates off and the man falls.

2D: Like what Russel said, I am the lighthouse in the dark. That man was in the dark, I offered to spare him some of my light, and he rejected. He fell and I think sprained his ankle or something. I don't think he should be giving roller skating a try again. He's pretty bad at it.

As 2D glides about, he encounters Jack Black again, and skates right behind him.

2D: This came out a little weird because when I saw the footage during editing, it looked a lot like I smacked Jack Black's arse. Now everyone thinks I gave the guy a spank! It's not what happened at all!

Russel: Why are you getting so defensive about it?

2D: COS THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED RUSS!

In the next scene, we see Noodle and Gorillaz A&R man, Remi Kabaka, playing a game of chess. Noodle checkmates Remi and grins, as Remi takes off his glasses in disbelief.

2D: I don't even think that was a legal move.

Noodle: Oddly enough, Remi Kabaka has been popping up in a lot of our videos as of late. No one even consults him about it, he just shows up on set and sticks his nose in the camera.

2D: He's the guy you went to school with who was never invited to parties but still somehow managed to find out every time one was happening, only to roll up with a pouch of turners and Sainsbury's own-brand vodka. He'd spend a good few hours sucking up to the loudest twat there hoping he could pinch that extra can of dark fruits if he played his cards right.

In the next scene, we see Ace hanging about with two guys playing basketball. Ace catches the ball, flicks his switchblade, and pops the ball, sending it flying. The two men begin to yell at Ace, as his smile turns into a frown. As the ball flies through the sky, it goes past 2D and Jack Black, Jack kicks the deflated ball, and it flies right by the camera.

2D: We had to retake that about a dozen times, that shot is just one of those things you can't do in one take.

Following this is a montage of various footage captured around the boardwalk of Venice Beach, surfboards, skateboards, bikes, stores, just your typical LA summer beach scene.

Russel: I think this is my favourite part of the video, just seeing all these different types of people, really capturing the LA scene. I think it's actually the part of the video that fits the most in line with what 2D was trying to do on 'The Now Now'. It's one of those rare glimpses where you see where 2D is coming from with his attachment to California.

As 2D continues skating throughout the town, we see Russel standing on the boardwalk, he looks over at 2D, a sour look on his face, before reaching out his foot, and tripping him.

2D: Hm…that was really nice. Now why would you go and do something dumb like that Russ?

Russel: 2D and I got into a bit of a heated argument before we did that scene. Originally, I was supposed to give 2D a high-five as he skated past me. But with how he's been acting, I don't think he deserved to be glorified like that at all. So I tripped him instead. Jamie ended up agreeing that it actually fit better than what was originally planned.

As 2D skids and bounces across the pavement, he looks up at Russel and Jack Black, as Jack walks away, continuing his guitar playing elsewhere. 2D gets up and angrily looks at Russel, with his eyes changing from white to black. He attempts to keep skating but falls over.

2D: That video was going pretty well up until that ending…

Russel: Sometimes you need a hard slab of concrete to the face to bring you back into reality.

And with that…once again…another Gorillaz video was completed, how many more do we have to cover?

2D: Throughout the video, I am wearing these Beats headphones. Which was part of another corporate collab we did which I won't get into. But I got a lot of flak for it. I remember reading comments saying, "Fucking Gorillaz have sold out! Beats man!". Firstly, Beats isn't a bad company. It's not like we are working with McDonald's; it's Beats, they make headphones. Second of all, we need the money to make videos. How else do these things get made unless there is money behind it? Beats are a cool company, as are Converse who we also worked with in the past. If we work with companies it's always gonna be someone cool, not arseholes. I was happy to work with Beats and Converse, they are cool companies. Without it, there's not gonna be any videos, there's not gonna be anything. All of this costs money. Gorillaz tours have so many people. The 'Humanz' tour had nine tour buses going around America! That's a lot of people from all around our catalogue to put in hotels, to feed, to pay; it all add's up! So the money has gotta go somewhere!

May 31st 2018 *Humility video and single is released*

Humility charted in a total of 8 countries reaching #81 on the UK Singles Chart, #85 on the US Billboard Hot 100, with its highest position in any chart being #7 in Billboard's Hot Rock & Alternative Songs. The Now Now album was announced alongside the release of the Humility single. Accompanied by an announcement for another world tour, with the first date being the following day!

2D: Wow. Murdoc was right, Hot Rock & Alternative Songs do love us, well, me. I guess they just tolerate you Russ.

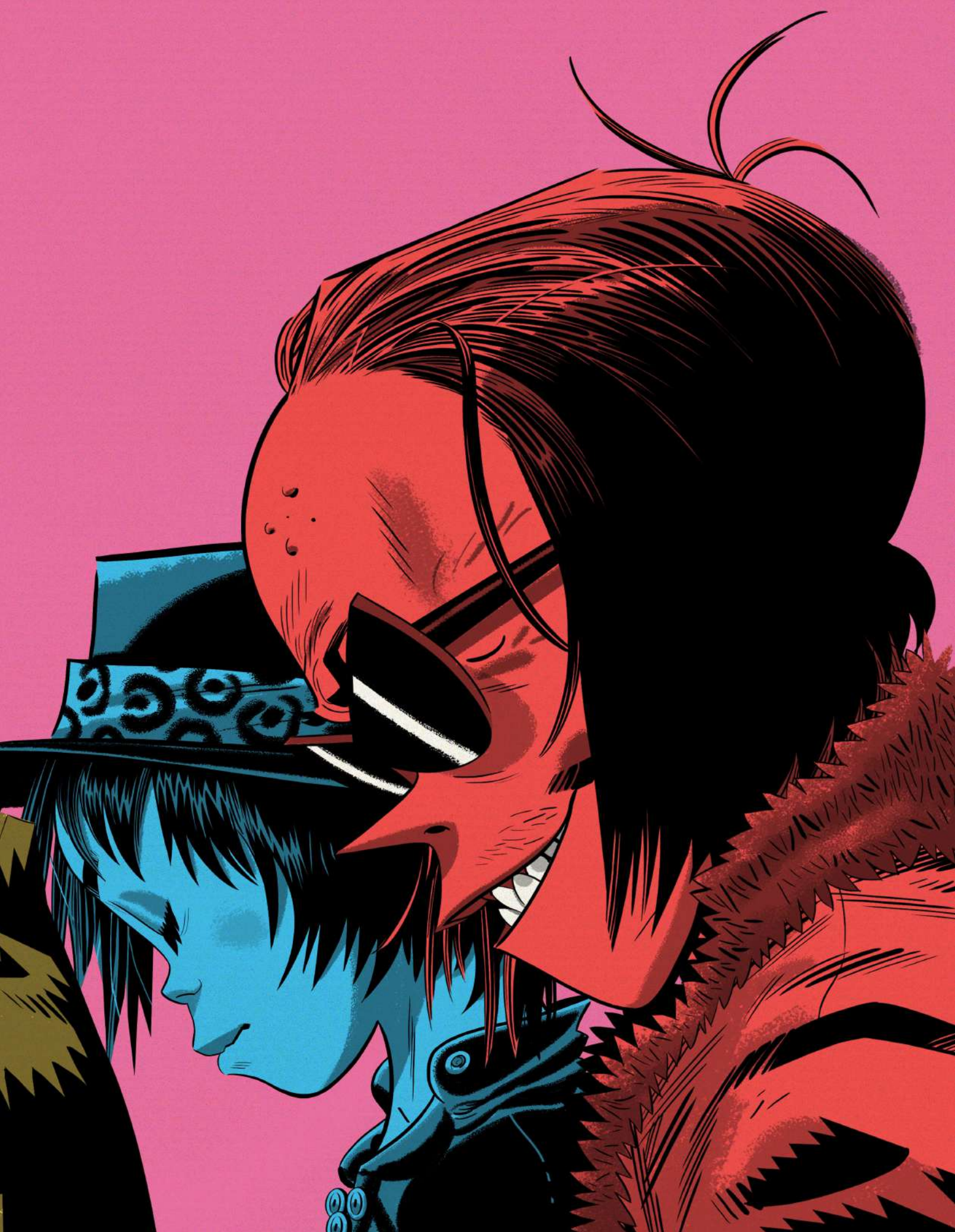
GORILLAZ
Humility
Vulgar
Vulgar

Super
SHITTY
ADVICE

GORILLAZ

NO MORE
UNICORNS
ANYMORE

NO MORE
UNICORNS
ANYMORE



The Now Now Singlez Released

Over the course of two months building up to their newest LP release, four more singles were uploaded to the official Gorillaz YouTube channel. The first of which being 'Lake Zurich', an instrumental tour of the overall vibe of the album, akin to Orchestral Intro.

2D: It doesn't exactly hold that position on the record itself, but promotion wise, this was it.

May 31st 2018 *Lake Zurich single is released*

Lake Zurich was released alongside Humility's music video, which probably makes this more of a b-side on a single come to think of it.

Russel: The lines have been blurred since Humanz, this format doesn't exactly work in the modern landscape of the music industry.

2D: Well we're too deep in to change it now.

Lake Zurich did not chart at any point within the UK, nor did any of the following tracks.

Noodle: That was a given.

2D: Was it? I thought these would do pretty well.

Russel: Tracks that scream scorching sun, summer fun, and sandy beaches don't really reflect well in areas like Hull.

2D: Rename it Humber River then.

Lake Zurich charted at #35 in the Hot Rock & Alternative Songs Chart.

June 7th 2018 *Sorcererz single is released*

2D: Ah Sorcererz… this one we dropped at a very important stage of the album's promotion, we were in a Hotel in Dublin, lovely place!

Russel: We all sat down for something to eat while waiting for it to drop, was fancying a bagel, I would've had it too if it wasn't for someone using up all the butter.

Noodle: Aren't you supposed to be Vegan?

2D: Well we were in Ireland. They're not my Cows.

Sorcererz charted at #36 in the Hot Rock & Alternative Songs Chart.

June 14th 2018 *Fire Flies single is released*

2D: When this one dropped I got up in the morning, got a bowl of cereal and sat at the computer. Listened to it and watched the visual then said 'That's pretty good!' Then I left. Any Questions?

Fire Flies charted at #32 in the Hot Rock & Alternative Songs Chart.

June 21st 2018 *Hollywood single is released*

2D: I don't actually remember releasing this one.

Russel: Can't say I do either…

Noodle: Guys, this conversation has me on the edge of my seat! Can we move on yet?

Hollywood charted at #26 in the Hot Rock & Alternative Songs Chart.

2D: Those Hot Rock fellers are proper losers!

The Boiler Room

On the same day as The Now Now's announcement, Gorillaz announced a tour in support of their new upcoming record. A follow-up world tour to 'Humanz' which finished two months prior.

2D: Between me and you, one of the reasons why I even did this album was so that the live band had some proper material to play at their gigs. The setlist they've been using has gotten so boring, and no way was I going to put a crowd of festival headlining gigs to sleep. Sometimes it's time to smash the cistern. And that's what I'm all about now, making change happen, and speaking the truth. Smashing the cistern. I might get that slogan printed on a hat.

Russel: You realise you're talking about 'The Now Now' right?

Noodle: We didn't get much of a new line-up for this tour. That would seem counterproductive, since this was only shy of a few months after we finished the tour for 'Humanz'. So most of, if not everyone that we toured with on that run of shows, came back for these.

Russel: Honestly, I think going back on the road again so soon after 'Humanz' was not the best idea, we usually get very burnt out while we tour, it's a miracle we got through that tour with no complications…well, other than our bassist getting arrested.

2D: Beats being locked in a dressing room.

Noodle: I think 2D just wanted to play his new material live immediately, I think he missed playing in America as well, and wanted to give that a second run.

June 1st 2018 *Rock im Park Festival, Nuremberg, Germany*

2D: This was the first show for the tour, only a day after Humility had even come out. Got to play a lot of tracks from the new album to see how the reception would go. I think it went pretty well if you ask me.

June 3rd 2018 *Rock am Ring Festival, Nürburg, Germany*

2D: What? Did we play in the same place again? What's the difference between this one and the last?

Noodle: I th-

2D: Ah, I don't care. Damon fumbled the bag on this one a bit, he doesn't come to rehearsals anymore, too busy partying off my success I suppose. I think this one was live streamed in 360 or something.

June 9th 2018 *Malahide Castle, Dublin, Ireland*

2D: Yeah! This one went well. A lot of cheering, some crying. There was a small group of hecklers shouting 'Free Murdoc', but Russ had them rounded up and driven off in a van. I've got more important causes to worry about than Murdoc's freedom, like saving Wales and smashing the cistern.

Russel: Would you shut the hell up about smashing the cistern? It's all you ever talk about now.

Noodle: No one knows what that even means.

June 15th 2018 *Sónar Festival, Barcelona, Spain*

2D: Peven never showed up to play this, probably was prancing about, staring at stars or pyramids somewhere. So we replaced 'Strobelite' with my song 'Sleeping Powder'. Fits a treat.

June 21st 2018 *Makuhari Messe, Chiba, Japan*

Noodle: I always have a lot of fun playing in Japan.

2D: Who woulda thunk it!?

June 22nd 2018 *Zepp DiverCity, Tokyo, Japan*

2D: Alright, here is the big one. We teamed up with the people over at The Boiler Room, to live stream this performance of 'The Now Now' album on our YouTube channel. This was the proper beginning of the tour for me, everything before were more like warm-up gigs.

Noodle: I think this was a smart decision. The Boiler Room is a company who strive to bring entertainment and culture from foregin countries to other countries. Building bridges between audiences. This show was going to be really big, so big in fact, streaming it live on our YouTube was probably the best way to go. And that was all thanks to The Boiler Room. The show was special, and people have liked 'The Now Now' very much. It's a very real and honest collection of songs.

2D: Japan is a special place for Gorillaz. It's cool and the fans get us and like our style. I saw a lot of fans dressed up as me, which was kind of odd. You don't usually do stuff like that for concerts, usually it's for like when you're doing a tribute band, on Halloween, or for some really dumb fucking talent show.

The gig was streamed live on Gorillaz YouTube and Facebook on June 24th 2018. Along with being streamed on The Boiler Room's Youtube, Facebook, and website.

THE NOW NOW

NO MORE UNICORNS ANYMORE

YOU GOTTA HAVE FATE

ALGORITHM IS A DANCER

INTELLIGENCE IS ARTIFICIAL

BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOUTUBE

EAT SLEEP TWEET REPEAT

STREAM IF YOU WANNA GO FASTER

POP AGANDA

STRANGER TOGETHER

ART DISEASE

G IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

Chapter 12
No More Unicorns Anymore

'Come by the long lake
Deep in the summer day
I'll be there with you
That's where I heard it for myself
On the training ground
For the new world
You heard it too…'

Free Murdoc!

Returning to Murdoc, he and the various other inmates of Wormwood Scrubs begin trudging along down the corridor to the visitors centre. His eyes are bloodshot, and he's wearing an orange jumpsuit, although oddly none of the other prisoners are, which perhaps makes it a personal stylistic choice. Around the room, more than a few inmates are sending ocular daggers in Murdoc's direction.

Murdoc: In prison, every man is an island, paranoid and cut off from the rest of the world, like this country post-Brexit. All you can do is defend your borders and boast about how big your nukes are. The current superpower in here is a psycho called Big Balls McGuinness. I'll probably twat him one, show these mugs who the real top dog is. Anyway, the wrongful imprisonment story the media has picked up on is mostly bollocks. Was just meant to be a bit of banter, but it got out of hand. I was happily doing my time, always happy to do a bit of bird...but then I heard the fans outside screaming for my release.

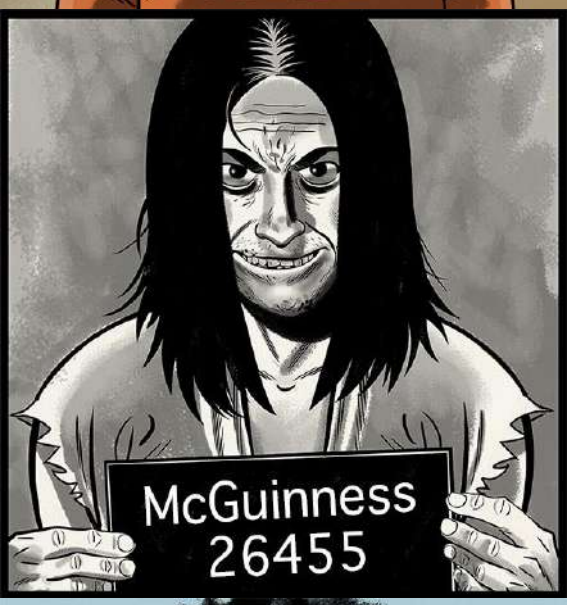
As of February 24th 2018, fans launched a 'Free Murdoc Niccals' campaign via the site Change.org in an attempt to have the bassist released from Wormwood Scrubs Prison. The petition hit over 10,000 signatures, but unfortunately (or fortunately depending on who you ask) the petition missed its target by 5,000 signatures.

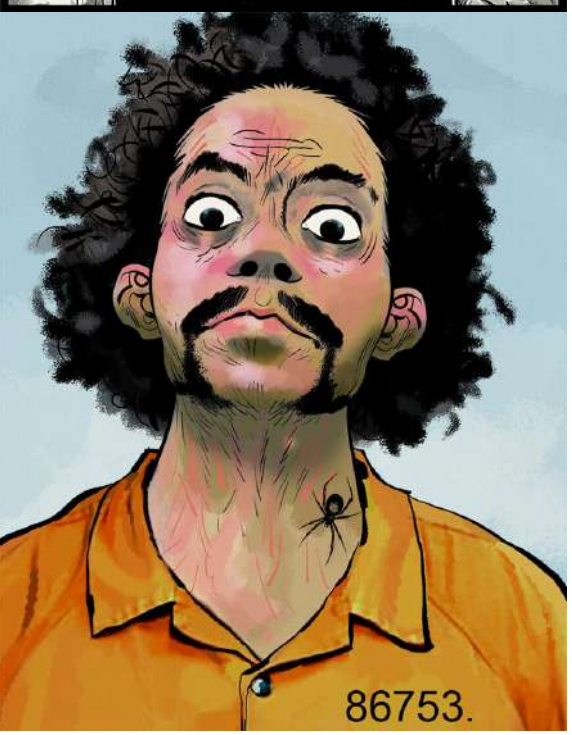
Murdoc: Yeah, it's no surprise to me that millions of people have-

It's not millions.

Murdoc: -billions of people have come together to fight this terrible injustice. The masses have spoken, Murdoc shall returneth, like a glorious rocket from the heavens, a great and terrifying phallus crashing to Earth to save all humanity, and make Gorillaz great again! Naturally, I hatched a master plan to get the masses all riled up. I'm gonna frame that wanker Juan from the Strobelite shoot, fabricate some evidence that this bastard is the bloodiest crime dynasty in modern history, monetise the hell out of this 'Free Murdoc' campaign, then stroll out of prison when my sentence is up with millions in the bag, that should make up for my Patagonia trip going tits up. Probably throw a nice welcome home party while I'm at it, see what Madonna's been up to recently. Sounds good, right?

Right…





LEFT
Beaten up Murdoc, Big Balls McGuiness & Vlad The Inhaler

Murdoc: It's all rather simple, I've had a mate of mine named Redmond set up this social media bot thingy, essentially when you attempt to contact me via Wormwood Scrubs Prison Messenger System, you'll be redirected to this programme. I've fed it with a ton of answers to the undoubtedly millions of stupid things my fans are gonna want to ask. (mockingly) 'Where's Cyborg' 'Did you really sell your soul to the devil?' 'FREE THE SEA!!!' God, I'm sick of it already just thinking about it…(ahem) So, er, yeah. I started sexing my story up a bit. Smuggling, NOT-guilty, etc. Also chucked in the name 'El Mierda' I'd heard in the prison yard. Point is, these little white lies are turning into a massive effing snowball…and I'm riding it all the way to the bottom of the mountain.

June 4th 2018 *Free Murdoc Chat Bot is launched*

Murdoc: 2D and the others are blanking me. So WHAM - the kids are up next. Murdoc's last resort. All these fans one-to-one with the most famous inmate since Al Capone. It was easy, just told 'em I'm chuffing innocent! Clean as a nun's browser history. Said I was framed for smuggling, imagine. Me? Smuggle? If I wanted something smuggled I'd wrap it in clingfilm and shove it up 2D's arse. I'm relying on these lot through my chat bot to get me out of this uncivilised rat-hole. And pronto. Gorillaz need me. The WORLD needs me. Plus I've come to the attention of a duo known as the Soap Sisters and I don't like the way they're looking at me…(ahem) so yeah, gave them the lowdown on this El Mierda tripe I'd conjured up and told them that they're gonna help me get proof. So my thinking was, everyone's connected in the criminal world. Someone in here is bound to have some info on El Mierda. Just one teensy little problem. Information comes at a price. And since Noodle's frozen my account, I need to pay with prison's other currency…respect. And the quickest way to earn respect is to pick a fight with the hardest bastard in the pen - Big Balls McGuinness. Pfft… Big Balls… His cronies have him surrounded at all times. I had to get him to come to me. A few choice insults did the trick. Had someone hack into the prison mainframe and send a goading message to Big Balls over the loudspeaker. It didn't go quite as planned. But in my defence, I had no time to defend myself. He sucker-punched me as I was doing my warm-up stretches. I protested, only to be informed there are no rules in a prison yard brawl.

WORMWOOD SCRUBS PRISON
HAMMERSMITH
LONDON
ENGLAND
XXXXXX XXXXXXX
MAKE GORILLAZ
GREAT AGAIN
#FREEMURDOC
MAKE GORILLAZ GREAT AGAIN
2018
MAKE GORILLAZ
GREAT AGAIN
FREE
MURDOC
FREEMURDOC

Murdoc: How was I supposed to know? No honour amongst thieves, as they say. Next thing I remember is waking up in the infirmary with my jaw wired shut and a few fingers broken. I had a lovely time in there to be honest. Comfy pillows, daylight, and all the baby food I could drink.

July 20th 2018 *Free Murdoc Chat Bot is reactivated*

Murdoc: They wheeled me into the computer room for my five minute's chat time. Told the lot that they're lucky to be alive, 'some say he can turn your own mother against you' ha ha ha. Anyway, thanks to my new medium-sized balls, a little birdie whispered in my ear that an associate of El Mierda is currently residing in the very same prison! Turns out he's real! What are the chances? But I was already too deep in it to abort the mission. El Mierda's associate goes by the name of Vlad the inhaler. Not the prettiest but if I was to continue this charade of tracking down El Mierda and prove my 'innocence', I was gonna have to go through Vlad. The location of El Mierda's hideout is a closely guarded secret. When I say "closely guarded", I mean Vlad keeps it on him at all times. And by "on him", I mean literally on him. It's a tattoo on his body somewhere. He's such a moron he got the map to El Mierda's hideout tattooed onto himself cos he kept getting lost, so I had a mate on standby to impersonate a woman…

August 2nd 2018 *Murdoc receives El Mierda's hideout coordinates*

Murdoc: I had Vlad reach out to a friend of mine. Thanks to a nifty bit of hacking by yours truly, he thought he was chatting with his fiance Millie. The mission was to get him to send a picture of that tattoo. I would've done it myself, only this needed to come from an outside line. They managed to outwit Vlad and get the map, it was a top job. Not that I ever doubted them. Now I'm not Sherlock, but to me those tats looked like coordinates. -41.907231, -68.961834. So now we knew where El Mierda is camped out, all we needed to do to prove my 'innocence' was to leg it out to his hideout, fight through his armies of homicidal henchmen, then beat a confession out of the twat. Liam Neeson was busy, but I've got someone better…

ABOVE
"I was expecting more hair if I am being honest"
MURDOC NICCALS

The Now Now Released

June 29th 2018 *The Now Now is released*

The Now Now debuted at number five on the UK Albums Chart, becoming Gorillaz' sixth album to reach the chart's top ten. In the United States, The Now Now debuted at number four on the US Billboard 200 with sales of 63,000 album-equivalent units, of which 52,000 were pure album sales, becoming Gorillaz' fifth top-ten album in the United States.

NME, 27th June: "On 'The Now Now', they follow the map they carved out back then but with a bit more swagger. Credited guests are limited to Snoop Dogg, soul legend George Benson and US house pioneer Jamie Principle. Like 'The Fall', it proudly displays its passport stamps, with songs like 'Kansas', 'Hollywood' and 'Idaho' appearing on the tracklist. Most importantly, it feels like Albarn and his alter-ego, 2D have reclaimed their place centre-stage. The musical output of the cartoon band – made up of characters 2D, Murdoc, Noodle and Russel – works in tandem with their current storyline. As told in the latest instalment to Gorillaz' highly entertaining mythology, their wicked bassist Murdoc is banged up in Wormwood Scrubs, and 'The Now Now' is the product of the sensitive 2D reprising his role as the band's creative driving force. After the bonkers apocalyptic house party of the last record, it's about recalibrating with modern life – away from bad influences. Albarn's lyrics are more introspective as a result. 'Humility', a G-Funk summer bop is paired with dreary lines about loneliness: "I don't want this isolation/See the state I'm in now?".

2D: Albarn is my alter ego? What's that even mean?

Russel: It means you're the Batman to his Bruce Wayne.

2D: Oh right, yeah. He's my bitch!

Rolling Stone, 27th June: "While The Now Now works as a piece, it does lack the sparks that come from the usual Gorillaz mess of ideas and personalities—the upside and downside of all bands, of course, as with most functional democracies. On "One Percent," Albarn conjures a race of people searching and listening to one another "on the training ground for the new world." It's optimistic by his usual gloomy standards, especially compared to the apocalyptic vibe of Humanz. But it's on point, and a pretty good metaphor for our present now now."

2D: These music journalists have it all wrong. The Murdoc spark was a BAD THING. Too political. We're not about that, are we guys?

Really…? I mean…

Russel: That's hard to argue when we've got a kids actor playing with us.

Ace: That's right! We're gonna get you, Powerpuff Girls!

ABOVE
Kourtney Kardashian with 2D

Clash, 25th June: "It's quite easy to lose sight of the fact that 'The Now Now' was rushed out, recorded in February in time for festival season, as it sounds typically expansive and self-assured. The cast is less star-studded than usual, but after 'Humanz' there was always going to be a dearth of collaborators. 'Hollywood' - featuring Snoop Dogg and Jamie Principle - is catchy but a little bit annoying, so it's not a huge loss. 'Kansas', 'Idaho' and 'Magic City' are good examples of the strain of off-kilter fairground melancholia that Damon Albarn excels at, but they sit a little uneasily amongst the slick, mutant funk reminiscent of records like 'Pacific' by Hosono and co. That the 'World's Most Successful Virtual Band' sounds like something you've probably seen on the YouTube sidebar is apt. Otherwise, it seems to be business as usual on another jubilant and solidly varied Gorillaz album."

2D: A bit annoying? What's wrong with it?

Russel: I dunno man, it's a little flat in the vocals.

2D: You're jokin' right?

Overall, The Now Now seemed to do its job of pleasing fans that were upset with the turnout of the previous project, with 2D taking centre stage for most of, if not, the entirety of the album. While other fans felt the record was very slow in some parts or lacked any ambition.

2D: What? Lacking ambition? Dear lord… there's just no pleasing people at this point, is there?

EFFIGY
Little
SHE

Tranz: Algorithm is a Dancer

Following the Boiler Room performance, Gorillaz began filming their second and final promo for 'The Now Now', with now veteran animation company, Blinkink, and another new coming company based in France, Eddy and Brunch.

2D: Eddy & Branch are these French geezers that Jamie brought over, he's been dicking about in Paris for the last few years.

Russel: Eddy is this company that makes French films, particularly ones in a live action format, while the sister company, Brunch, is an in-house animation company that makes well…animated films, they're each their own separate thing, but they are both tied.

Noodle: I have always been an avid fan of French cinema, there is just something about how they make their films that I find very aspiring as a creative entity myself. How they're shot, the composition…"Caché" is a great one, and "La Cité des enfants perdus", er, "The City of Lost Children" in English, and "Delicatessen" is another good one. Jean-Pierre Jeunet is such a talented filmmaker. My all time favourite film is "Enter The Void". That's a good one.

2D: Let it be known that I am the one who actually showed you all these French films. So in a way it's still my doing.

The video in question, would be for the upcoming single 'Tranz'. With Jamie Hewlett set to return in his director chair. The video would be co-directed by Nicos Livesey, who came from the Eddy and Brunch company.

Russel: We recorded this video in the basement of Spirit House. It would essentially be a performance video, with us in front of a green screen. In post we would add all these trippy backgrounds, and special effects. Give the whole video this really unnatural atmosphere. It seemed to have a desired effect, a lot of our fans thought we were possessed or something.

2D: This was actually our first performance video since 'Feel Good Inc.' which is pretty backwards if you ask me. We're a band, we make music, there should be more videos of us playing music.

Noodle: At the same time, it's hard to do videos like this when you have to tussle with demons, zombies, and pirates on the regular. It felt nice to go back to our roots and do a straight up performance piece again.

The video opens with a neon title card that says "Gorillaz Tranz" which lights up before going back to dark.

2D: The opening was supposed to be footage they got of Ace and I having a conversation on set. He was saying some pretty raunchy stuff while doing his sorta, character from the Powerpuff Girls.

2D: Cartoon Network was still airing that controversial reboot of the show, which Ace was on, so they probably would've sued us if any of that conversation was released to the public. So we just used this neon sign we had built for the opening instead.

We see a bright light, before we are close up facing directly at 2D, as the camera zooms out we see the rest of the band playing their respective instruments. 2D grabs his microphone and begins to nod along to the beat of the song, a miserable expression smeared on his face. A complete whiplash from his mood in the previous video.

2D: I think I'm just getting sick of this all now. I don't get it, I've finally gotten everything I've ever wanted. Murdoc's gone, people are actually listening to me, I'm a semi-respected artist, money, that Kardashian bird (which is NOT working out AT ALL by the way), and my songs on the setlists. Why do I feel so…miserable? I'm doing this shit greenscreen promo video with this washed up C-list kid's actor. I just don't know what the hell I'm doing anymore really…

As 2D begins to sing, we see different shots and views of the rest of the band.

Noodle: I dyed my hair orange for this video, I wanted to try some new colouring. I usually always dye my hair blue or purple, no one really noticed though, so I thought this would be a way for people to actually notice.

2D: You dye your hair?

Noodle: You change your eyes?

Russel: Ace's movements and mannerisms in this video are heavily inspired by that of Gorillaz live bassist, Seye Adelekan, which makes sense since Seye taught Ace a lot during the tour, those two seemed to have a whole total bromance going on.

As we reach the chorus, 2D spreads his arms out wide, as light protrudes from his eyes.

2D: Oh yeah the light thing, I could always do that.

Really?

2D: Yeah. I can take your nose off too if I do this.

2D reaches out and places his thumb between his two fingers.

2D: Bellend.

Ok...as the video progresses, the band members begin to enter this loopy weird trance of sorts, this is then intertwined with stop motion animation of 2D.

2D: The bloke we got to do those bits, his name is Lee Hardcastle, I saw loads of his videos on YouTube, he's done a lot of stop motion, and I really dig his work. I saw him doing these little recreations of Evil Dead and The Exorcist and stuff. He's really cool, so I wanted his work in the video.

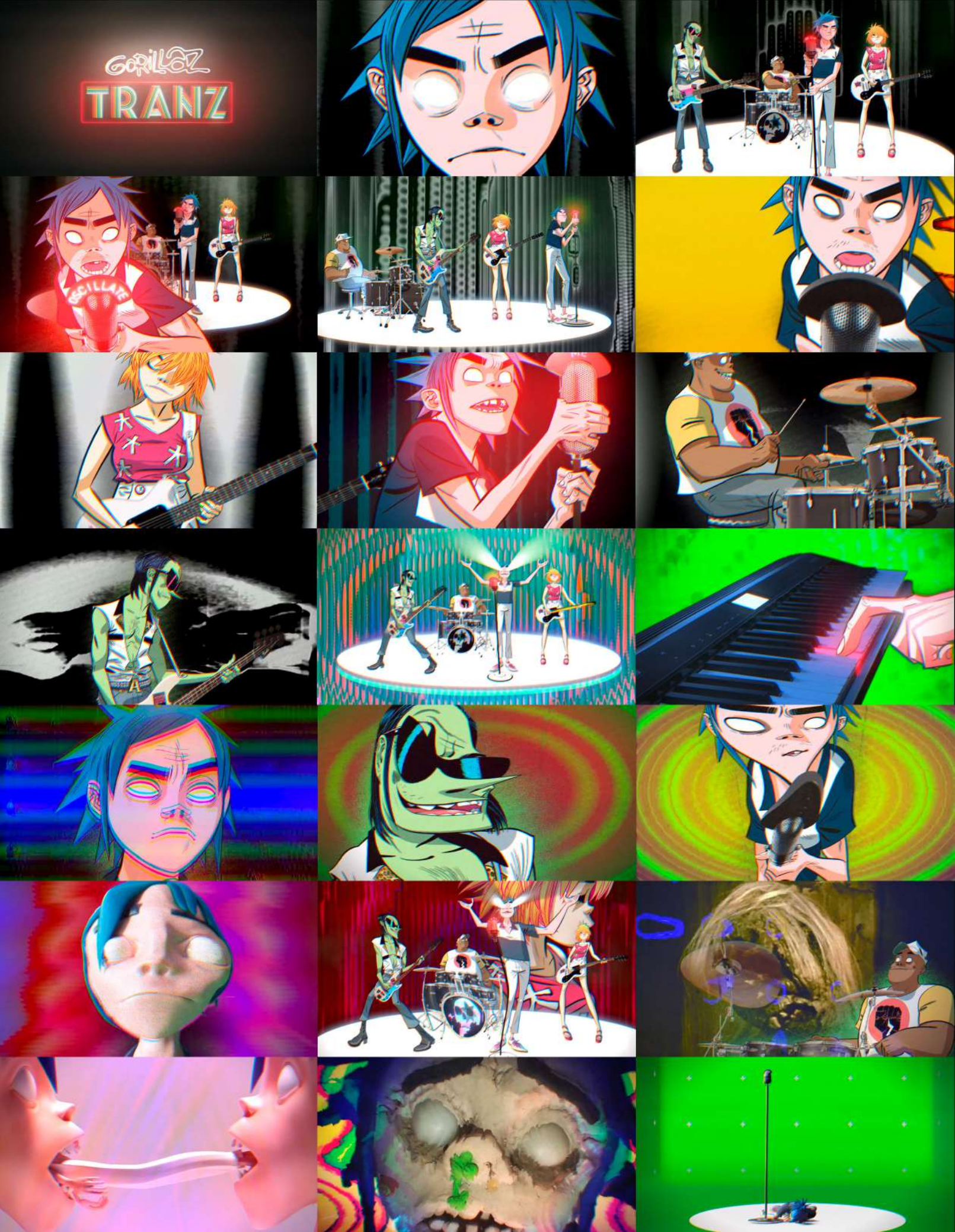
As the video is getting ready to wrap up, the song abruptly stops as a stop motion 2D drops to the floor, and the green screen that was used can be seen.

2D: Yeah not a lot going on in this one, just us playing really…

September 14th 2018 *Tranz single and video is released*

The single managed to chart at at #16 on the Billboard's Hot Rock & Alternative Songs Chart.

2D: Yep…shocker.


GORILLAZ
TRANZ

The Now Now Tour

What is this?...the third world tour we are covering?...fucking hell…alright, get on with it then.

Russel: For a lot of this tour, we saw a lot of fans with a bunch of Free Murdoc merchandise. Hats, shirts, signs. Seems like this campaign has spontaneously burst into existence, unasked for. Like the universe. No one knows how it started, but it's too late to stop it. Am I behind it? Can't say I am. Got a movement of my own bubbling with Gorillaz. We have our own message to get out. Speak the truth. Mean what you say. Be yourself.

2D: Meme what you say! And be your selfie. Always try to be your selfie, that's the real you.

Russel: Uh, yeah, something like that.

July 5th 2018 *Rock Werchter, Werchter, Belgium*
July 6th 2018 *Open'er Festival, Gdynia, Poland*
July 7th 2018 *Roskilde Festival, Roskilde, Denmark*

July 11th 2018 *Gurtenfestival, Bern, Switzerland*
July 12th 2018 *Lucca Summer Festival, Lucca, Italy*
July 14th 2018 *Bilbao BBK Live, Bilbao, Spain*
July 19th 2018 *Paléo Festival, Nyon, Switzerland*
July 21st 2018 *Vieilles Charrues, Carhaix-Plouguer, France*
July 22nd 2018 *Lollapalooza Paris, Paris, France*
July 25th 2018 *UPark Festival, Kiev, Ukraine*
July 28th 2018 *Park Live, Moscow, Russia*
August 9th 2018 *Sziget Festival, Budapest, Hungary*
August 11th 2018 *Boomtown Fair, Winchester, UK*
August 16th 2018 *FM4 Frequency Festival, St. Pölten, Austria*
August 17th 2018 *Lowlands, Biddinghuizen, Netherlands*

2D: This was an exciting show to play! Tomorrow was going to be the World Cup game. Eden Hazard is my favourite player in the Chelsea football club. David Luiz? Nah, he's shit. I was just sucking up to him before in front of the cameras. Eden Hazard is the real MVP. Damon and I even changed 'Kids With Guns' lyrics so we were chanting 'Eden Hazard!!!!!'

Russel: We also played this show on Jamie Principle's birthday so we wished him a happy birthday before 'Hollywood'.

2D: Yeah feliz navidad and all that. But football! That's where it's at man. God I love football! I love Chelsea.

July 7th 2018 *Roskilde Festival, Roskilde, Denmark*

Russel: Somewhat of a tragedy happened at this show, during 'Clint Eastwood', we had Del The Funky Homosapien come out and do his usual rap, but he fell off the stage while he was making his way across. We ended the show immediately and rushed Del to the hospital. He had multiple broken ribs and a punctured lung. He was supposed to tour with us up until our Paris, France gig, but he had to unfortunately recover in the hospital. It was probably one of, if not, the scariest moment I ever had at a Gorillaz gig. The fact that someone in our family got injured badly. It was just not a good day.

2D: (in tune with Clint Eastwood) Finally someone let me falls off the stage!

Russel shoots 2D a murderous glare, as if he is resisting the urge to punch the halfwit vocalist he'd only grown to despise more and more as the tour pressed onwards.

Noodle: On a brighter note, my friend Moonchild Sanelly, did her own take on our track 'Out Of Body'. Personally, I thought it was pretty good, maybe even my favourite rendition of the track! The audience and our fans seemed to disagree though.

2D: Yeah it was terrible. But lend me your ears for a moment. Have I yet to express my deep admiration for football yet? Oh man! At this gig, Damon, Jeff, Seye, and I all wore these jerseys of the England national football team. England had made it to the semi-finals for the World Cup. We wanted to show all the love and support we could.

July 11th 2018 *Gurtenfestival, Bern, Switzerland*

2D: They didn't win…

July 12th 2018 *Lucca Summer Festival, Lucca, Italy*

2D: This was our first ever gig in Italy. I think Murdoc was fixing to go here during the Plastic Beach tour, but it didn't work out for some reason or another.

Noodle: I just can't believe we've never been here. Let's hope the next time we see each other won't be in 20 years.

2D: You got that off Damon didn't you?

Noodle: …Maybe….

July 28th 2018 *Park Live, Moscow, Russia*

Noodle: In Moscow, a torrential storm came down, so we had to stop the show for fear of being struck by lightning. But I don't think I should read too much into that. It was fun and exciting. Of course, everyone was ok, if a little wet…

August 11th 2018 *Boomtown Fair, Winchester, UK*

Russel: This was a nice show. Something weird happened though, right before we were about to start 'Hollywood'. Snoop Dogg hacked our main screen and talked to the audience. It was so bizarre. I was waiting for the go ahead to start the song, and then Snoop Dogg is just everywhere! On all our screens at the venue. It was a pleasant surprise. I just wish he consulted us about it first.

August 17th 2018 *Lowlands, Biddinghuizen, Netherlands*

Russel: This was our last gig in Europe, and also a last for a lot of things. This was our last gig playing with Ace as our bassist. He had been touring with us for about 11 months at this point. I would've loved him to stay longer, but with the events that unfolded within the next few weeks, he wouldn't be playing with us again for a while. This whole show was strangely melancholic. Before 'Andromeda', we played a small tribute to Aretha Franklin, who had unfortunately passed away the previous day. We had our choir sing a little bit of "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman" in memory of her. Peven was taking it pretty hard, we both shed some tears before and after the show. She was an inspiration to all of us. Her music touched an entire generation. There's a reason why she is considered 'The Queen Of Soul'. The band was a little off as well. 2D was resigned and quiet, though he's been like that for the last few weeks now. Noodle unexpectedly left the band after the show, apparently she had to go to Patagonia to get something sorted regarding Murdoc.

Russel: We wished her good luck and safe travels, told her to keep in contact too, I don't want her to be getting into any trouble again… So at this point, D and I were the only remaining Gorillaz left, not counting Ace. Just a weird conclusion to this leg of the tour really.

2D: It's all fallin' apart really, init? We're down to two members… again. I'm startin' to think we really do need all four of us present to make this REALLY work, god forbid.

Russel: Well, the shows are going well at least.

2D: Yeah but so were the shows without you, for the most part. But it's not the same.

Russel: Suppose not.

2D: I can't help but feel like I've sorta driven everyone away, like I've taken being my best self a bit too far.

Russel: Well there's a difference with being your best self and manning the wheel.

2D: You wat?

Russel: Well, being in charge don't make you a better person D, it just makes you kinda… well, a dick. Sometimes it's necessary to get shit done, but it goes to your head if you let it… you with me?

2D: I think so… like Murdoc, yeah?

Russel: Well, sure. But Murdoc hasn't been here for almost a year now, has he?

2D: Oh, yeah. I suppose not…

…

2D: Russel?

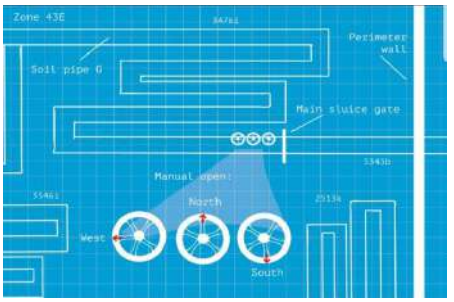
Russel: Yeah?

2D: I'm sorry.

Russel: I know. You're alright man.

Meanwhile, in Patagonia…

Upon the retrieval of El Mierda's coordinates, Murdoc hatched a plan to send an assailant to go and 'persuade' the crime lord to admit to framing our hero, but who would he send?



ABOVE
"It was a lot easier said than done..."
MURDOC NICCALS

Murdoc: I'll give you a clue, it's the first person you'd expect it to be.

Noodle?

Murdoc: Bloody hell, you're a sharp one today! Of course I'm talking about Noodle! She's got more moves than Kung Fu Panda.

Don't you think that's a bit… Distasteful?

Murdoc: NO! No, no, no, no, no…I didn't mean it like that, you know I didn't mean it like that. Can we keep this going? I've only got five more minutes left. The hardest part was trying to convince her that I'm sorry and a changed man and all that bollocks.

Is it true?

Murdoc: I suppose, well, I'm not too sure yet. I am sorry for some of it. But I don't know if I really HAVE changed, you know? I think I've settled a bit at least, making an effort. Man hands on misery to man, and this man is sick of doing so a bit now, but not fully. Still sent her to Patagonia for a laugh, after all she did leave me to rot in prison and froze all of my assets, I mean, aren't we supposed to be friends? I worked tirelessly last album to please those three and they didn't once appreciate it.

Sounds like you were being selfless with selfish intention, maybe they caught on to that.

Murdoc: No- well…is it so bad to want them to like having me around?

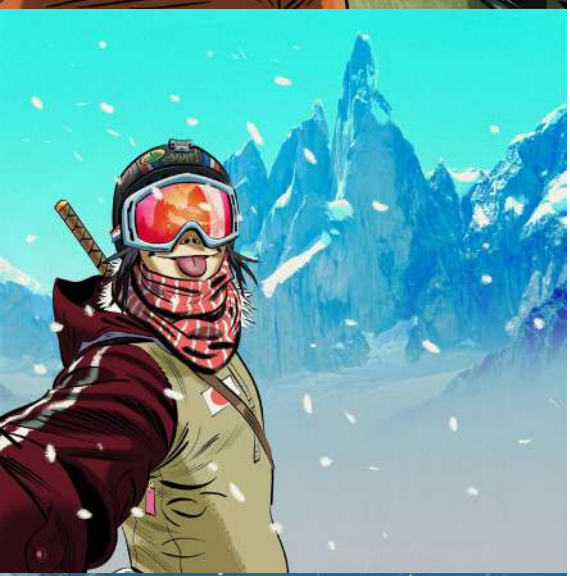
You were smothering them it seems.

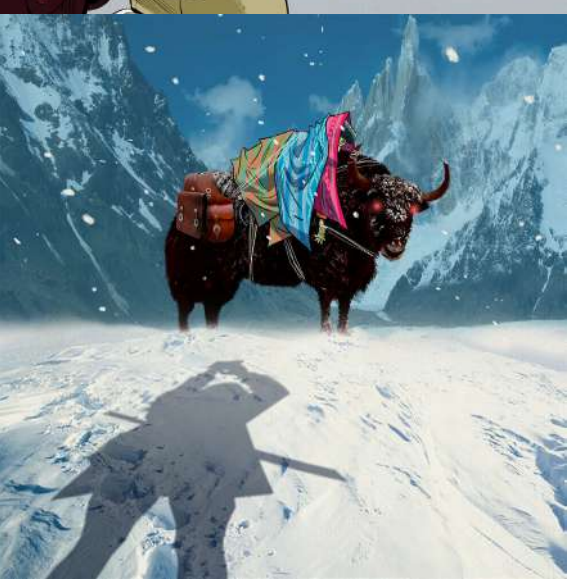
Murdoc: Oh fuck off mate, you weren't even there for most of it. It wasn't who I really am and they caught onto that pretty quick. There was a problem though…she was still a teensy bit pissed off with me for…well, being me I reckon. I had a few loyal fans encourage her to take a look, gave her the map info, THEN persuaded her to hunt down El Mierda and get him to confess that he framed me so I can cover my tracks for botching this scam. Got all that?

August 17th 2018, Murdoc convinces Noodle to travel to Patagonia

Noodle: Murdoc had coordinates sent to me which led to Patagonia. At first I thought 'what could he possibly be looking for in those mountains?' then I remembered El Mierda… Murdoc found his hideout for me to go after, but the real question was, why help a scumbag? He doesn't deserve help.

BELOW
Murdoc in his prison cell,Noodle in Patagonia, Murdoc on Madge.





Noodle: Not even if he says sorry. His 'sorry' means zero, he's said it so many times. But the truth is I owed him one. He saved me from Hell so he gets one free pass, and this was him using it, although I'd be lying if I said it wasn't out of pity. Hunting people across a frozen wilderness and facing death at every turn. Sounds fun right?

Back at Wormwood Scrubs, Murdoc decided to fake an escape attempt from his cell for…well, we're not quite sure.

Murdoc: It's called showmanship, the tabloids have been eating all this 'Free Murdoc' stuff up, we need to give them the grand finale! Told everyone I was in the shit, literally, in a sewer pipe underneath Wormwood Scrubs, the campaign and framing El Mierda was all coming to nothing. Noodle was supposed to beat a confession out of El Mierda but she went AWOL on me… and nobody had heard from her since. I don't know what I was thinking asking her for help. She couldn't give a monkeys about me anymore. That girl is indestructible but I may have overreacted by sending her to a crime boss's HQ for a publicity stunt. I can be a bit volatile when someone hurts my feelings I guess.

What did she do to upset you so badly?

Murdoc: Besides replace me and leave me in jail?

So you're not happy with The Now Now?

Murdoc: What, '2D's eleven step guide to self love'? Pfft. Nah mate I don't give a scooby about that, the tracks are great I guess, but it wasn't the music that got to me it was…more…how disposable I was, I suppose.

Aren't you the one who stopped responding to Ace's calls?

Murdoc: I don't think you're getting it, are you? There is no further motive than wanting to be respected and accepted as an equal.

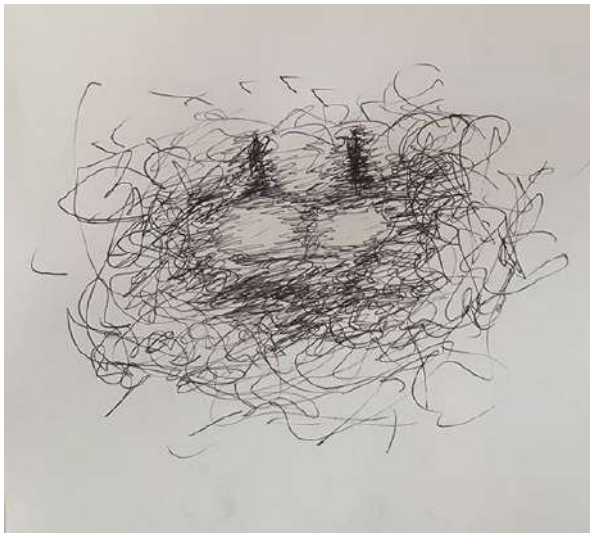
You did the exact same thing for Plastic Beach…

Murdoc: Again, I'm not talking about the music. Can't you get that through your freaky cube-shaped head? Going back to it, I faked my death in that sewer, my final bow. But then I quickly realised that, well, bit pointless really. It was good for five minutes of fame but everyone knew it wasn't the end anyway because of all those loony conspiracy articles about musicians and cults like the 'kool klown klan' and 'Murdoc Niccal's the immortalist' and 'The murder of Jimmy Manson'...I think I have a tendency to overshare.

September 14th 2018 *The truth of El Mierda is revealed to the public*

Noodle: When I made it to the coordinates, I was expecting henchmen, boobytraps, three-headed animals, the normal secret hideout stuff. But what I actually found was a health spa, not an evil hideout, a HEALTH SPA for wellness. I was greeted by someone in a robe offering me tea…El Mierda WAS a seriously evil crime lord, but he retired a few years ago. Apparently after Malthus' death at Plastic Beach, the disappearance of the Boogieman, and then the assassination of Maazu, Beelzebub (El Meirda's boss of sorts) was out for blood. He would stop at nothing in hopes of seeing Murdoc's head on a pike. Having been bested by a mortal drove the dark one to the brink of insanity, he was a total laughing stock. With his reputation ruined the entire criminal underworld turned to dust. El Meirda shut down the empire he'd built to get away from it all and turned his hideout into the El Montana Wellness Center out of fear of being next on this hypothetical 'hit list'. I demanded to speak to him so they led me to a room in the back. I go in. Sat on the floor in bharadvaja's twist I see… a VERY small old man, over a million years old. I confronted him about El Mierda and asked where he was, and he said 'I am El Mierda'... He'd never even heard of Gorillaz, which was good for me, only stories of 'a green trickster with a silver tongue and a lavish purple cape'. Nothing was adding up here, so I called the prison and they told me Murdoc wasn't even jailed for smuggling, it was for parking fines. Murdoc made this whole smuggling story up, but I still didn't understand why he'd do all of this. As time passed, his lie got bigger and bigger. So big he sent me all the way to Patagonia for nothing. Although it wasn't a total waste of time, I did enjoy the hike. Murdoc's release date on the form the prison had sent me was the very same date he 'broke out'. He could have just walked out but no, not Murdoc Niccals, he had to stage a prison break. If you ask me, maybe he wanted attention. Like when a little kid is jealous of their baby brother, they start screaming, throwing food everywhere to say 'look at me!'. The more love 2D was getting, the more Murdoc's story grew… I don't know how to feel about that, it's not even a thing of irritants anymore, he's just sad. He's desperately been trying to keep us together for so long no matter what the cost, it's just hard to appreciate when you take into account his methods…

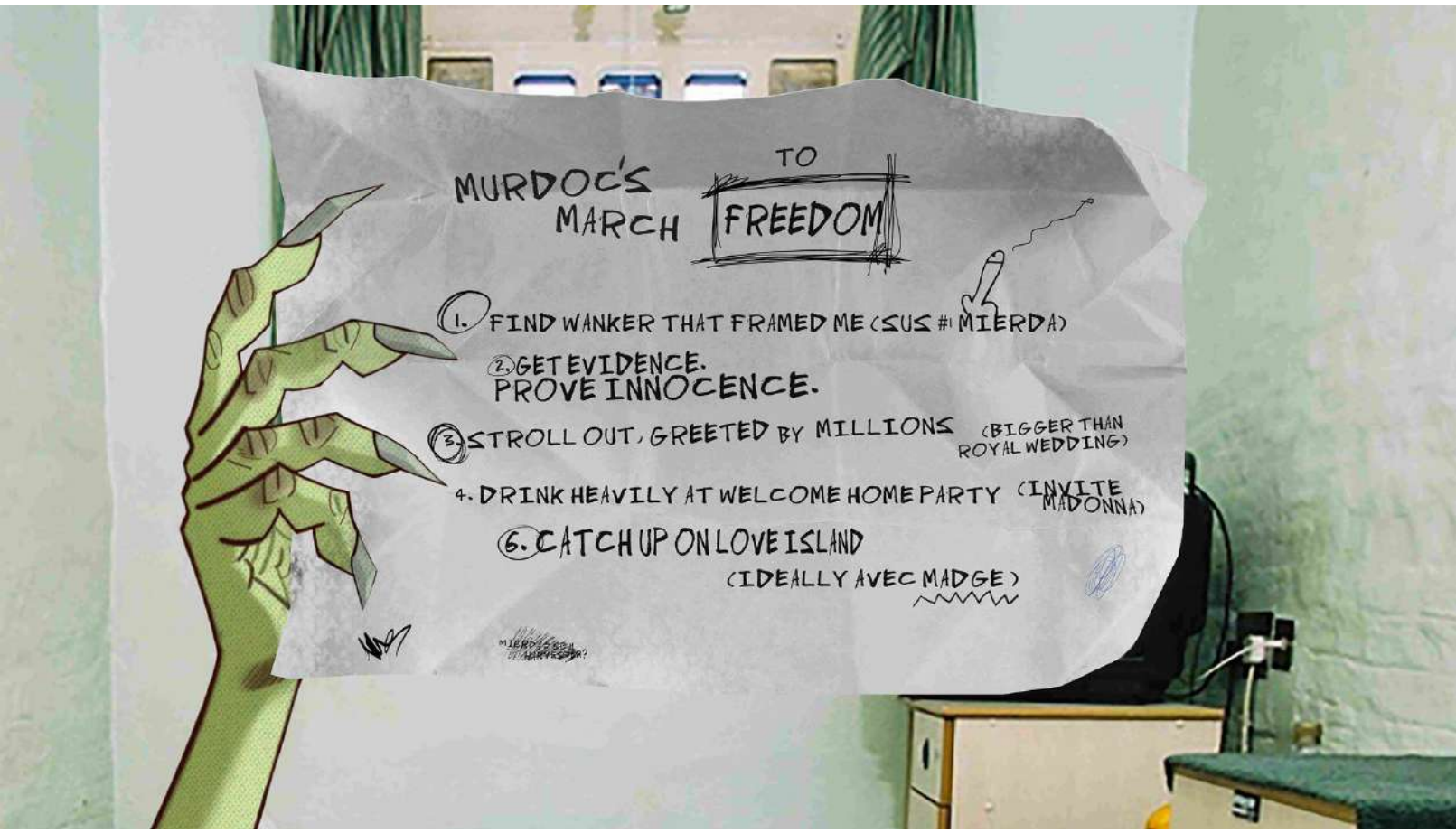
Murdoc: My guilt was getting the better of me, what if that El Mierda psycho had taken her prisoner? It would've been my fault…again…so I uber'd to Gorillaz HQ, had a quick flannel wash, then got the next plane to Argentina…see I had to stop beforehand, I may have gotten a bit carried away with the whole 'faking my escape' thing, because I actually went into the sewers after I was let out…and…er…I may have actually drowned while doggy-paddling through raw faeces. Even the thought of it makes me want to die, swallowing logs, going up my nose, in my ears. And for what? Nothing! To make headlines! At my lowest, I finally realised what a twat I am. But it was too late, I was drowning. Just at the point of death, I saw… Well, I dunno. Can't put it into words. But it was beautiful and terrifying. I did a sketch of it… Next thing, I wake up by a sewer gate in an Aldi car park, embalmed in shit, but alive. God knows how, or why. All I knew was, I'd been given a second chance. A chance to make things right. When I finally got there, not one bastard would help me go after Mierda - all too shit scared. Best I could do was buy this dominic yak off some old warlock.



ABOVE
Murdoc's drawing

OPPOSITE
A lifesaver

Murdoc: He said it was once human, turned into a yak by El Mierda. Tragic really. Anyway, me and Madge trudged on - a pair of damned souls, searching for salvation. I was told Madge knows the way, so I had the warlock rope me on cos I knew it would be a gruelling journey. And even if I didn't make it there alive, this letter I was carrying would…


MURDOC'S MARCH TO FREEDOM
1. FIND WANKER THAT FRAMED ME (SUS #1 MIERDA)
2. GET EVIDENCE. PROVE INNOCENCE.
3. STROLL OUT, GREETED BY MILLIONS (BIGGER THAN ROYAL WEDDING)
4. DRINK HEAVILY AT WELCOME HOME PARTY (INVITE MADONNA)
6. CATCH UP ON LOVE ISLAND (IDEALLY AVEC MADGE)

Murdoc: Days, maybe weeks later… I finally see Noodle stood over me, alive and well. I would have cried if my tear ducts hadn't frozen over. She dragged my frozen body to a hot spring and chucked me in. Noodle was pissed off, but saw what a hero I was for coming to save her. She didn't thank me, but didn't kick the shit out of me either. So all was well again. We spent the next few days enjoying the spa facilities. All in all, top holiday in the end. As soon as I got home, I started working on my new 'Murdoc Manifesto'. A list of all the ways to be a better man. I put being nicer to 2D on there but let's not run before we can walk… In the end the whole Free Murdoc campaign did free me. Not from Wormwood Scrubs - but from that other, far worse prison I was in… That was it really: The Glorious Tranzformation of Murdoc Niccals (working title), a changed man from now on, all will be well… Right, let's wrap this up shall we? Anything else you want to ask before I F off? No? Well, I'll leave you with this. I feel like I've learned a lot more this time round, it really has been a crazy ride, hasn't it? The Black Clouds, the Boogiemen, the live shows, the fights, the fallouts, the make ups, the break ups. Kong Studios, Plastic Beach, Abbey Dungeon, Wobble Street, Studio 13, Spirit House, Wormwood Scrubs…I know it seemed like a load of old tosh, but I am trying to better myself, and I know there's a helluva long way to go to atone for all the awful things I've done.

So, you're sticking to this better self plan you have going?

Murdoc: Maybe not all the time. I dunno…I think…I think the hardest part for me…I was chasing something. I don't mean the drugs or the drinking or even the girls, although I suppose that is part of the problem. I mean - all my life I've had this like, this voice, telling me that one day I'm gonna do great things yeah? Like everyones gonna love me, like I can make a difference to something…amount to… something. I was so obsessed with becoming something larger than life, something greater than just a footnote celebrity, a kind of bookmark in history that you can't ignore no matter how much you want to just because of how much of a bloody eyesore it is (snickers)…did it with Gorillaz, the arms trade, the Book of M.A.N, Free Murdoc… My reputation has started to precede me quite heavily, though I'm sure you can tell. Probably all that stuff with my Dad and, I dunno, (sharp inhale) I don't suppose I've really ever had a true friend, have I? All the people who did see good in me, Like 2D in those early years, I push them away don't I? Sabotage the lot. Set myself up for failure…

Murdoc glances to the floor, wipes his eye quickly, then hides his face.

Murdoc: I want to be better…

Are you…crying?

Murdoc: What? No! Cmon, there's melodramatic then there's just poor writing. My face was just itchy. Moron. But I do mean it, I do want to be better, but family's always gonna fight, right? Won't be the last time me and 2D butt heads over the spotlight or Russel sucker-punching me in the nose, or Noodle threatening to kill me if I don't behave. Like I said, that's family. You roll with the punches, don't you? Speaking of punches…

September 20th 2018 *Murdoc returns to Gorillaz*

Murdoc: Kicked the door in, twatted 2D square in the nose, sparked a cig, raided the fridge, got out the ol' sock, then revved up the amp. Best part was I didn't even mean to hit him for once, lad was just looking through the doors peephole to see what all the noise was when I booted it in.

How did he react?

Murdoc: Well, he'd seen better days…there was lots of shouting…and swearing…and threats of physical violence (not from me, surprisingly).

What did you do?

Murdoc: I took it on the chin. Kept my cool, stayed quiet and let him vent.

And?

Murdoc: AND. He tuckered himself out, things got a bit too er, emotional for my liking after that. Few tears here and there…again, not from me.

So, what's next for you both?

Murdoc: I made a promise, back there in Patagonia. Noodle said 'I owed him my respect'. Do I believe it? Bollocks. But he has gone through a lot, hasn't he? I was a bit over the top at points. Maybe I didn't need to hit him so hard, I could've maybe just said "please!" every now and then, but would I heck. "Hand on my big black heart" I said, "I won't lay another finger on him, so long as he continues to run those golden pipes of his into the dirt for my bank account". That seemed to work well for everyone, especially 2D.

Murdoc: In fact, I think I'm getting the short end of the deal here - no flicking fag ends at his stupid head or shagging his girlfriends in the shitters, or even gassing him out cold for a final curtain call. It's asking for a lot for such little in return but er, a promise is a promise… Until it isn't.

Sorry but…"heck"...really?

Murdoc: Jog on mate, you've had your fill.

Noodle signals a thumbs up to Murdoc, letting out a beaming grin.

A remarkable sense of maturity seems to have been garnered after a period of self reflection, I see.

Murdoc pulls out a freshly opened packet of his brand of choice cigarettes, lucky lungs, and pulls out an inverted tab. Once lit he takes a deep breath and raises his head to the ceiling, before letting it drop as if to look directly at me with his soft swollen pupils.

Murdoc: I gotta tell you man I have no clue what was in that baggy I found but my head feels like it's about to pop, anyone got the time?

G Time is Now

Nearing the end of 'The Now Now', Gorillaz set out on yet another brand collaboration before they retreated into the shadows once more. After years of anticipation, it was finally time for the world to be graced with Gorillaz watches. And who else to collaborate with than Casio, and their new line of G-Shock watches.

2D: Can you stop doing that wavy thing with the text, please?

Noodle: The collaboration came about when I met Mr. Kikuo Ibe, the man who invented the watches, in Tokyo while we were on tour. He brought us to the Casio headquarters in Shibuya and showed us around. He expressed heavy interest in doing a Gorillaz collaboration, which intrigued the three of us.

Murdoc: Well, I was banged-up for much of the conceptual stage, so I was happy to see they made a green watch to match my distinctive skin type. While it's impossible to reduce a being as terrifyingly complex as Murdoc Niccals into a wristwatch, G-Shock have had a bloody good stab. The Murdoc watch is suave, moody and just a little bit cheeky, while also pulsing with sexual energy. The other ones are top-notch in their own way, but obviously nowhere near as sexy. It does get a bit lost on my wrist though, so I'm planning to switch with Noodle. But don't tell her.

Russel: Each watch is engineered from strands of our DNA, then set to the rhythms of our individual heartbeats…

Murdoc: Wha- really? I didn't agree to this.

Russel: Nah, just kidding. They're different colour schemes and designs, and are engraved on the back with our faces in profile. Mine's a different model - bigger, tougher and solar-powered - Armageddon-proof, I call it. Pays to be prepared.

2D: Personally, I just really needed a watch. Mine broke in 2003 and it's been stuck on 10:37 ever since. Which is useful twice a day, but apart from that it's quite misleading.

Kikuo Ibe: G-Shock aims to be the toughest watch in the world, and started development thirty five years ago. Even if an ice hockey stick was to hit it hard, or it was run over by a large truck, G-Shock would remain tough and wouldn't break. I was given a watch for the first time as a gift for entering high school, and when I dropped it, it broke into pieces. I came up with the idea of developing an unbreakable watch having seeing that, but it was harder than I had originally thought. I couldn't move forward at all, and my head, although it's a lot better, felt like it was going to explode at the time. I had even prepared myself to quit if it didn't work. But, I believed that I can absolutely solve this with my own belief; to never never give up.

2D: So what did you do to get over this obstacle?

GORILLAZ
X
G-SHOCK
PRESENTS

MISSION M101_

MISSION M101
I NEED
YOUR HELP!

mission: M101
MR IBE

mission: M101
GALAXY
M101
MR IBE

MISSION M101
G-TIME IS NOW

TO BE CONTINUED...

Kikuo Ibe: Well, one time when I saw a girl playing ball in the park, it gave me the idea for the watch movement floating in that ball. That was my light bulb moment, at the same time it was the moment when the module floating structure was born.

2D: You're a very curious man.

Russel: Gorillaz always strives to be in the moment, reflecting the present like a funked-up, interdimensional hall of mirrors. What is G-Time? It's right Now, the only time that matters. The one constant in the cosmos. Time is gonna pass, so make it count. If you got stuff to get done, get it done. Time is ticking. Or, y'know, elapsing on a sweet LED display. So it was totally natural to hook-up with an iconic timepiece.

ABOVE
"It was a cozy feeling working with him. I'm glad we did though."
NOODLE

December 15th 2018 *Gorillaz X G-Shock watches are released*

2D: Ah they're lovely, I am gonna take one home and tie it to a woodpecker's beak.

Murdoc: Ay you lot, my watch is beeping loudly, saying it's G-Time, what is that?…is there a bomb in this thing or something?

Kikuo Ibe: So, as G-Shock is thirty five years old, to celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary. I started to dream about wanting to see aliens wearing the G-Shock. I am thankful that Gorillaz realised my dream.

2D: Mr. Ibe told us his dream about going to space and giving his watches to aliens, and I was like, "Whoa, that's a cool dream, do you want to hear the dream I had last night?", and he said no. So we just focused on his dream.

Murdoc: I'd like to know about your dream.

2D: Really?

Murdoc: Erm, (tuts) no…

Noodle: As much as we would like to accomplish his dream, it's near impossible to go to space and give out a bunch of watches to aliens. So we teamed up with Blinkink, Feed Me Light Animation, and BRVTVS Collective, who are a division of Feed Me Light, to animate us helping Mr. Ibe give out watches to intergalactic species.

BELOW
2D & Noodle in conversation with Casio

PROTECTION
G-SHOCK
TO BE CONTINUED...

2D: I liked these shorts. It's always nice seeing myself as a cartoon.

Murdoc: It wasn't funny the first time mate, just drop it.

Russel: In the end, these shorts came out looking really nice. We released two of them during the build-up to the release of the watches, and a lot of the fans seemed to dig em.

Murdoc: My first winnebago went to Mars once. Does that rub you the wrong way? Yes? Then you'll hate these shorts. And you know what? Good.

2D: Yeah it was quite nice up in space, it was really good to give the watches out, before the end of the night everyone was wearing them. And it's very good for us to know that now aliens have time on their hands.

Kikuo Ibe: I'm pleased to hear that.

2D: I bet.

Noodle: I should mention during the rollout, 2D and I did an in-person interview with Mr. Ibe. We don't do stuff like this often, so this was a fun way to kill an afternoon.

Murdoc: Can I just say? This has gone on for far too long now, and I don't mean this section, I mean this whole bloody thing. I'm bored talking so god knows how you feel reading. I'm terribly sorry. Go have a cuppa and come back yeah? We're almost there, I promise.

Demon Dayz 2018

Following the return of Murdoc Niccals, Gorillaz embarked on their final leg of shows for The Now Now tour.

October 8th 2018 Scotiabank Arena, Toronto, Canada
October 9th 2018 Bell Centre, Montreal, Canada
October 11th 2018 Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
October 13th 2018 Barclays Center, New York City, New York
October 14th 2018 TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts
October 16th 2018 United Center, Chicago, Illinois
October 19th 2018 HD Radio Sound Space, Los Angeles, California
October 20th 2018 Demon Dayz Festival 2018, Los Angeles, California
October 24th 2018 Palacio de los Deportes, Mexico City, Mexico

October 8th 2018 Scotiabank Arena, Toronto, Canada

Murdoc: Ah…the stage…it's good to be back.

Russel: This was our first show for the North American leg of our tour, and our first show with Murdoc back on bass.

Murdoc: I could tell all the live band people were happy to see me. Seye, Jeff, Karl, Matt, Mark. Timmy, Pip, Connie.

2D: You're just listing names now.

Murdoc: Wheezy, Cadence, Mario, Bill…

2D: I don't think any of the live band were that happy to see you again Murdoc, they kept avoiding making eye contact with you the whole night.

Russel: I'm already starting to miss Ace. The air was fresher when he was around. Now all I breathe is ash and lube.

Murdoc: Oh can it Russ.

2D: Something we did for this show was hold an online poll on our website where fans were actually able to vote for which Gorillaz song they wanted to hear on the setlist. We didn't listen to them though because that would mean we'd actually have to rehearse, and I dunno about you but I don't have time for that.

DEMON DAYZ

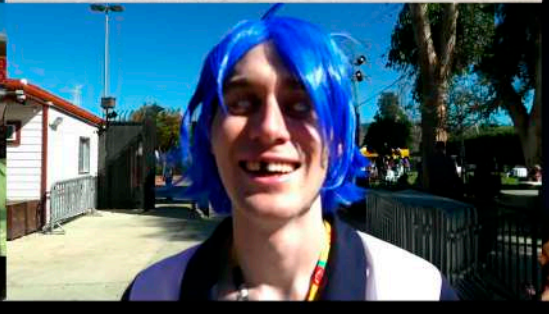
Mordor
NICCALS
PICKLES

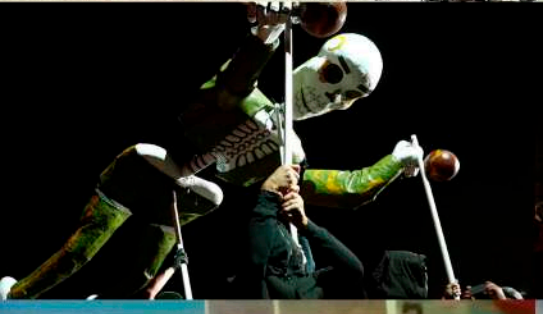
G STORE

STYLO

DEMON DAYZ

DEMON DAYZ

DEMON DAYZ
HOBBS
HOT
SAUCE




October 11th 2018 *Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Russel: This was a nice gig. However, Damon said something near the end of the show that sent the crowd a bit crazy. Saying something along the lines of 'We are going to be going away for awhile'. Which is understandable, but then he said something to the press which was unbelievable, saying that Gorillaz were going away for 10 years.

Murdoc: Are you shitting me? This man is impossible I swear.

Noodle: I mean we've done two albums back to back, so it's been almost four years of nothing but Gorillaz, and we love to do Gorillaz because this is where we get to do what we want, it's our baby, and we have this amazing fanbase, but I think we're all just a bit tired. We've been on the road for two years at this point, and it's exhausting. So there is going to be a break but it's not going to be 10 years. In 10 years Murdoc is going to be 60 years old.

Murdoc: And I will still be as sexy and dangerous as I was when I was 20.

2D: If we keep going like this Murdoc won't make it to 60.

Russel: Gorillaz is how we get to express ourselves and do exactly what we want and we've built up a very large family of creative people, artists, musicians. I mean Gorillaz just started with 2D and Murdoc in Essex, and now there is a lot of people involved, you have Hypnotic Brass, De La Soul, Snoop Dogg, all these people are part of the Gorillaz family. There is no way we would just stop now, that would be a ridiculous thing to do. We just need a break, that's all.

October 19th 2018 HD *Radio Sound Space, Los Angeles, California*

Noodle: This was a pretty special gig, we teamed up with KROQ, this radio station based in California, for the live band to do a free intimate acoustic show. Tickets were put up for grabs on the KROQ website. The gig was supposed to be inside the sound space, but the band decided at the last minute to do it in the carpark. Which I think was a better approach. The gig was streamed live on YouTube, and was available to listen on the KROQ radio station.

Russel: We would've loved to come to this gig, but we decided to stay back and rehearse for our Demon Dayz festival gig for the following day.

October 20th 2018 *Demon Dayz Festival 2018, Los Angeles, California*

Murdoc: Here it is, the big one.

Russel: What is there to say that you won't already know? This was THE defining show of this era of the project. The ultimate celebration for everything and anything Gorillaz.

2D: We had some wicked people with us for this one, Tony Allen, Hypnotic Brass-

Noodle: Little Simz, DRAM-

Murdoc: My left nuttie, sir sucksalot-

Russel: The Internet, Kilo Kish. It was a fantastic time for us all.

2D: I don't remember no sucksalot

Murdoc: He was by the bogs for most of the day.

2D: No he wasn't! You're doing that thing again, where you just list random names! It's so annoying.

Murdoc: Is that Massive Attack at the door?

2D: Really? Hang on-

Russel: Demon Dayz, it's artists that Gorillaz respect, folks we feel the world needs to get more of in their ears and minds. Great musicians, great people. Eclectic, too. Afrobeat and Neo Soul sharing the same stage? Hell yeah.

2D: It's for everyone. Although hopefully not everyone comes 'cos the queues for the toilets could get quite long.

Murdoc: Thanks to my good pal sir sucksalot.

2D: Demon Dayz stands out because it's not like other festivals, actually it's more like an anti-festival, festival, i.e., the opposite of a festival, while also still being a festival. But we are anti-labels at Gorillaz, so it's not that either.

Noodle: For this show, Murdoc surprised us by inviting our former bassist Ace to come back and do one last show with us before he was about to head home to write his memoirs.

Ace: Hi, guys! How ya doin? I'm gonna do some Gorilla lyrics later, or somethin'. I don't even know what I'm talkin' about. Hahahahahahahahaha.

2D: Yeah. What he said.

Russel: I'm shocked that you invited him after you just wanted Ace to be our tour bus driver going forward

Murdoc: Yeah well...I had a change of heart. Remember? From this point onwards, starting now, I will never ever tell a lie again.

Interestingly enough, fans were left a bit curious as posters of a warm-up band for the festival known as The Rejects were plastered all over the venue. Could you explain this?

Murdoc: Noideawhatyou'retalkingaboutneverheardofthem.

…Alright then.

Noodle: The festival went swimmingly, it was just magical really. The date of the gig was close to Día de los Muertos. So we decided to theme the whole venue around the holiday. We had mariachi bands at the front entrance to play some enchanting music for our guests, there were these really beautiful Mexican decorations all over the festival, and then these big Día de los Muertos sculpture puppets of us that they hung up and carried around before the show. We each contributed some sort of attraction when we were mapping out the festival. There were art exhibitions, a tea garden, a tattoo trailer, and a lucha libre stage. Like what Russ said, this was the defining show of the Gorillaz project.

Murdoc: Yeah it was…until Damon had to cock it up by whipping out his Blur music during the encore. It was going really well up until then…I can't even yell about it really…my throat is very parched from yelling for the last twelve years anyway.

THE NOW NOW WORLD TOUR PRESENTS

¡GORILLAZ!

ULTIMO DÍA DE LA GIRA MUNDIAL

24 DE OCTUBRE

PALACIO DE LOS DEPORTES

GORILLAZ.COM/TOUR

The Demon Dayz 2018 festival line-up included Ana Tijoux, Las Cafeteras, Chulita Vinyl Club, D.R.A.M., Erykah Badu, Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, The Internet, Kilo Kish, Little Simz and Tony Allen. With the Gorillaz show itself featuring George Benson, De La Soul, Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, Peven Everrett, D.R.A.M, Jamie Principle, Little Simz, Bootie Brown, Leider Chapotín, and Graham Coxon.

LA Times, 21st October: "In an era of music-festival overload, when too many events are indistinguishable from too many others, Damon Albarn of Gorillaz deserves credit for working to make Saturday's Demon Dayz festival reflect its Los Angeles setting. Held in and around the Pico Rivera Sports Arena — not exactly a go-to spot for out-of-town pop stars parachuting in for a weekend — the daylong concert featured local food, a roving mariachi band and lucha libre wrestling between acts including Gorillaz, Erykah Badu, D.R.A.M. and the Internet. But if Albarn spent months planning Demon Dayz, as the English singer claimed during Gorillaz's headlining set, he still couldn't have arranged for Saturday's most indelible moment, which happened when word of the Dodgers' pennant-clinching win began spreading excitedly from fan to fan just as the giant puppets of a Día de los Muertos parade snaked through the crowd. Talk about a clear sense of time and place.

As unpredictable as it was, this juxtaposition of the jubilant and the macabre was perfectly suited to Gorillaz; since being formed by Albarn in 1998 (as a diversion from his day job fronting the Britpop band Blur), the group has become a reliable source of party songs about the apocalypse."

Russel: Really, is there anything else to say? This is us beginning to say our goodbyes, starting to get things packed up.

October 24th 2018 *Gorillaz play their final show, Palacio de los Deportes, Mexico City, Mexico.*

Murdoc: This was it…Mexico…the end of the road.

You don't get away that easily, you know what I'm going to ask.

Murdoc: It's now or never chief.

Mexico.

Murdoc: Yep.

You played in Mexico?

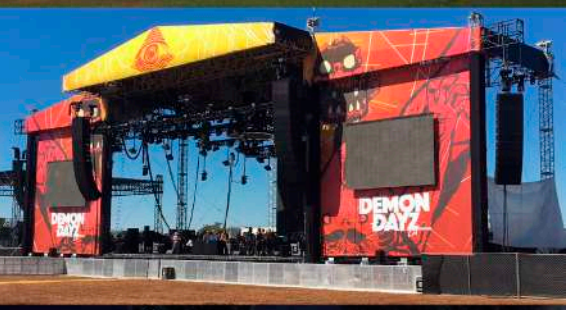
Murdoc: That's right.

And you pulled this off how exactly?

Murdoc: Alright, well…maybe I'm not the 'heart of gold' changed man I claimed to be. I dropped Ace a text after the Demon Dayz show, asked if he wanted to join us for one last hurrah in Mexico but asked him to keep it on the low, you know? Keep it a surprise for the kiddies.

And?

Murdoc: AND, Pablo. You remember him right? Bandito feller I used to run with. Well he owed me a favour after getting those certain unsatisfied customers off our backs…he paid a little visit to the lovely folks over at the Mexico City police department with a few friends of his to have a certain mugshot of mine swapped out for one that's the spitting image of a certain replacement bassist.



You framed Ace?

Murdoc: I've missed enough shows mate, this is still my gig. Last I heard he's hiding out in a bunker somewhere in the Mexican desert, I don't think we'll be seeing him again any time soon.

What about his memoirs?

Murdoc: Well… I'd say we covered that for him, don't you think? So it wasn't entirely untrue, was it?

As devious as ever I suppose

Murdoc: Some things never change…

Russel: The final show in Mexico was melancholic to say the least. At the end of our tours, we all usually have this mindset of 'oh thank god this is over and done with, we can get back on with our lives.' But I don't know, I was gonna miss these people, miss my band, miss the crowd. Usually with every new tour we get a completely new line-up…but these guys are different from others we had before…I want them to stick around with us for the long-haul.

2D: We can't really go into much detail about this, the setlist wasn't too crazy, usually the same set we've been doing all tour, no big show-stoppers, no fireworks, no giant inflatable titty gorillas, just a regular show to end everything off. It was nice…just to take it easy after our big festival, leave with simplicity.

Noodle: At the end of the show, Jamie came up on stage with Damon and the two embraced each other with a hug. That was really sweet. Murdoc usually knocks both of them off, but in my opinion, Damon and Jamie are the fifth and sixth members of Gorillaz at the end of the day, that is if you don't count my Cyborg counterpart or Ace. They've changed and grown up just like the four of us have, they've been with us since the beginning, I've known them since I was a little girl. They are just as much of Gorillaz to me as 2D, Murdoc, and Russel is. I wish we weren't behind that screen, because I wanted to be out there with them, all of us together. But I guess I should just let bygones be bygones. I think next tour we will hand off the touring to the live band. They've earned it. Touring can be such a pain in anyway.

Murdoc: I still think Damon's a massive fruitcake.

HOOSIER
X MOVIES
OPEN 24 HOURS
UPSTAIRS
HOUSE OF PARADISE
AMSONN THEATRE
23

ACE

The New Dawn

The Last Interview, Spirit House, Detroit, Michigan.

After 96 gigs, and a total time played of 6 days, 3 hours, 20 minutes, and 12 seconds. Gorillaz returned to their home on the outskirts of Detroit. The house seemingly stronger than ever, with the cobwebs cleared and the carpets vacuumed. It's almost as if the balance had been restored once more; the heart and spirit of the building had blossomed into something that felt like a true home for our animated four piece. The grand hallways of the Spirit House were filled with life as they all raced around packing their bags.

Murdoc: Bit on the nose mate!

Murdoc Niccals, former arms dealer, debt dodger, immortalist, and the only man to have ever walked the earth who has bested the prince of darkness and lived to tell the tale, comes shooting down the staircase bannister, suitcase in hand, to greet me with a murky side grin and a slap on the shoulder.

Russel: We got places to be so let's wrap this up quick, aight?

Murdoc takes a long look around the glowing hallway of the building, a place he'd come to consider as not only a home, but as a landmark in the monumental goliath of a tale that Gorillaz has become. His head lingers in place while staring at a sun ray shining through a window above him.

Murdoc: You know what? You three can handle this one without me, I've said enough.

He swings open the front door one last time, tips his military-esk visor cap, then totters off down the road.

So, where are you all going?

2D: Well I'm off to Beirut because I don't know if anybody noticed but I am actually supposed to be living there, I dread to think how many unpaid bills I have in that flat.

Russel: I wanna try and do something outside of music, whenever Gorillaz go their separate ways, I have a tendency to sorta er…crash. This time I want to pull my own weight. I think I'm gonna head over to Mexico, get a flat for myself, and try something in another field. Perhaps something in the food industry…

Noodle: And I'm off to see as many natural wonders of the world as I possibly can before they're all gone. With every passing year we race even faster towards our inevitable doom, and with every day hope dwindles just a little more, but you can't let it get you down. That's exactly why you should get out there and see it before it's too late!

And Murdoc?

Noodle: Every year he goes on an annual trip to Ibiza, and every year he comes back so mauled from all the cheap drinks and whizz that he can't remember going. Wakes up thinking it was all a dream and books his tickets for the next year.

Sounds about right… So is that it? Are Gorillaz finally hanging their hats?

2D: No, I wouldn't say that, I just think the first two times we got burnt out on each other, only this time we've decided to take a step back before things get to that point again, y'know? We just need a little break. I don't think there'll ever be a point where we hang our hats, we don't have a hat rack for a start, but us four do seem to be binded together, our lives endlessly intertwined. Even if we don't do anymore music, I'm sure we'll be kicking about somewhere. You've just got to look hard enough.

Russel: It's the end of the road, but when I say this is the end of the road, that doesn't necessarily mean this is the end of the road, it's the end of this particular road. We've seen the thing grow and grow and grow, and the way that we performed it and the tightness and the whole conversation between us and the audience. The whole thing's got to a really…er…first class. It's first class now. And that is testament to absolutely everybody.

And you're all on good terms?

Noodle: Murdoc will never fully change, he's a clown. We have no obligation to stay around him, but sometimes you just can't help yourself, he only sees himself but that is why I find myself liking him so much. He is a very unique character. No matter how frustrating it may be, we always help bring out the best in each other creatively. Just don't take him too seriously.

2D: I'm still trying to find it in my heart to forgive him I suppose, but I don't hate him, at least I don't think I do anyways. That last album I probably learned more about Murdoc than I did myself, simply from acting like an arse for a year. It takes its toll on you, you know? Makes you feel real…I dunno, he's getting better.

Russel: We're never really on bad terms, but we also got our own lives away from this project of ours. You gotta revitalise yourself after doing two records and two world tours back-to-back before you can do anything else, otherwise we'll just be at each other's throats.

So you're leaving the Spirit House permanently?

Noodle: Well, we may come back to it eventually, but it wouldn't really be convenient given how there's no actual studio here. We're in talks with longtime collaborator Damon Albarn about possibly renting out his West London studio and rebranding it to Kong Studios for if we ever decide to do another project. Most of our stuff is already there.

2D: If you look at our history you'll notice we have a tendency to charge through HQ's like wrecking balls, so I think us movin' out is a mercy for this place.

I'm getting the impression that this break of yours won't last very long, you're never usually this smiley post-album.

Noodle: After years of working together, we've finally devised a formula to when we feel fit to work and when we need our space.

Russel: Long story short - yes - we do have something planned, but it ain't ready yet, we'll worry about that after we get back.

You're inching close to your 20th anniversary, any thoughts and reflections? Looking back on 20 years together on and off must be…exhausting.

Russel: We've stood the test of time, for a while I did doubt us, wondered if we were just a fad, a one hit gimmick, but I think we've proven over and over that we're more than capable, we're the definition of capable artists, literally, the Gorillaz family is so big now.

Noodle: It's been wonderful working with such amazing people from around the world the past twenty years. We've been incredibly lucky to have had the opportunities we've had, I love this band and I wouldn't change anything about it for the world. I began playing with these two when I was eight! So I think I've earned a rest.

2D: Someone once told me you should never look back. I can't remember who, and it doesn't matter now 'cos that's the past and they're most likely dead. Like right now, for example, I really need the toilet, so I better go. Goodbye, thanks for your time, you've been great, I have been 2D.

Noodle: On behalf of Gorillaz and myself, we'd just like to say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts. And, you know. Keep in touch.

Until their inevitable return, we can only wait in anticipation to hear from the four who make the world's most successful animated band, Gorillaz. 2D, Noodle, Russel, and Murdoc, are off starting a new adventure. The three make their way out of the house, look back in beaming joy, then all part ways. All that's left is a mouldy green smell; old pizza boxes, spray paint, a couple of banana peels and rotting apple cores. The smell of another successful run…or so I was told.

THE END… FOR NOW.

RO!

Epilogue

March 13th 2019 *An unmarked document arrives at the vacant Spirit House.*

The file, addressed to one Gorillaz, stamped with blood-red ink reading 'TOP SECRET' accompanied by the imprint of barbed headphones and the date March 7th 2006, had a note scribbled on the side in biro.

The choppers.
You guessed wrong,
from a friend.

MISSION SUCCESSFUL: INFLUENCE UNDETECTED.

Legal Shit

CREDITS

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‘Every care and attempt has been made to acknowledge and thank the legions upon legions of associates, contributors, and facilitators involved with my band Gorillaz. If there is anyone we have missed, however, please take this as a personal snub and let it haunt you all the way to the grave. It’s almost definitely deliberate, as these things usually are.’

MURDOC NICCALS, MD